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Yoga in America: History, Community Formation, and Consumerism

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Yoga in America: History, Community Formation, and Consumerism

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2013

Dedication

For Pete and Charlotte

Yoga in America: History, Community Formation, and Consumerism

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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This dissertation explores the ways in which various Western yoga teachers have interpreted and presented yoga to an American audience, and how media outlets have represented those yoga practices to a broader American audience between the 1890s and the 2010s. In particular, the case studies illuminate the ways in which contemporary concerns have influenced how yoga teachers and media reports have framed and responded to yoga practices. In this dissertation, I present a series of Western yoga practitioners that embody the most interesting and distinctive representations of popular understanding of yoga for their individual historical moments. Though the chapters do not reflect a linear development, recurrent discourses concerning Orientalism, post-colonialism, race, gender, sexuality, and class in the United States re-emerge in each chapter as different yoga schools respond to local and global concerns. Through these different vignettes, a trajectory of American yoga as taught and practiced by Westerners in the United States historicizes yoga in ways that are often overlooked in favor of the "timelessness" of the practice.

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Introduction

In 2013, yoga is a commonplace practice in America. No longer an utterly foreign exercise led by South Asian immigrants or a practice reserved for, what some derogatorily deemed, New Age fadists, yoga in the past twenty years has entered the cultural mainstream. Gyms once dedicated to weight lifting and aerobics now regularly offer yoga classes. Popular films and television have embraced the yoga studio as an appropriate setting for protagonists to chat with their friends. Major clothing brands such as J. Crew, the Gap, Adidas, and Nike have added yoga clothing to their product lines, and specialized yoga companies such as Gaiam, lululemon, and Prana have emerged. As of the end of 2012, around 20.4 million people practiced some form of yoga, and among non-practitioners 44.4 percent of Americans reported to *Yoga Journal* that they are interested in trying yoga.[1] How did the practice of yoga, viewed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as an occult, foreign, and mysterious practice, grow to be a $10.3 billion industry in the United States?[2]

Contemporary yoga teachers and their followers have oft stated that the appeal of yoga lies in its timeless wisdom that provides an antidote to the modern problems of the twenty-first century.[3] These claims are based on the idea that yoga is a practice, written down in the second century BCE by Patañjali in *The Yoga Sutras*, which allows a person

[1] *Yoga Journal Releases 2012 'Yoga in America' Market Study* (December 5, 2012), accessed February 27, 2013, http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/yoga-journal-releases-2012-yoga-in-america-market-study-182263901.html
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Enlighten Up!*, directed by Kate Churchill (2008; USA: Gravitas Ventures, 2009), DVD.

to tap into a universal spirituality that has since been interpreted by various gurus creating specific lineages of yoga.[4]

What those who argue for the timelessness of yoga neglect to consider are the historical circumstances that shaped yoga and the reception of yoga over time. This dissertation explores the ways in which various Western yoga teachers have interpreted and presented yoga to an American audience, and how media outlets have represented those yoga practices to a broader American audience between the 1890s and the 2010s. In particular, the case studies illuminate the ways in which contemporary concerns have influenced how yoga teachers and media reports have framed and responded to yoga practices. In this dissertation, I analyze a series of Western yoga practitioners that embody and articulate changes in popular understandings of yoga at key historical moments. In this work, I discuss a range of individuals and groups, from practitioners of yoga-in-name-only at the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society in the 1890s and 1910s; to a yoga teacher interested in Tantrik practices running a country club for wealthy New Yorkers in the 1920s and 1930s; a Hollywood yoga teacher and author of yoga manuals that had housewives donning leotards to practice Hatha yoga in the 1950s and 1960s; a founder of a small off-shoot of the Self-Realization Fellowship and operator of a successful intentional community in the 1960s and 1970s; and the corporate success of the yoga clothing company lululemon and memoirist Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray,*

[4] Satischandra Chatterjee, and Dhirendramohan Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1984); Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Axel Michaels, *Hinduism: Past and Present*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Love) in the late 1990s to 2000s.[5] While these chapters do not reflect an unbroken chain of causality in the development of yoga in the United States, each case study addresses recurrent discourses concerning Orientalism, post-colonialism, race, gender, sexuality, and class in the United States re-emerge in each chapter as different yoga schools responded to local and global concerns. Through these different historical case studies, a trajectory of American yoga as taught and practiced by Westerners in the United States historicizes yoga in ways that are often overlooked in favor of the "timelessness" of the practice.

What is Yoga?

Simply stated, "yoga" means "to yoke or to create union," but that union takes many forms. In the United States, a variety of physical and spiritual forms of yoga have waxed and waned in popularity. Currently, in the United States, yoga is mostly associated with what Elizabeth DeMichelis has called "modern postural yoga": practices that focus on *asanas,* or physical poses.[6] The types of modern postural yoga popular in the United States include Hatha, Ashtanga, Vinyasa, Iyengar, Kripalu, Kundalini, Bikram, Jivamukti, and Power. Despite the differences in yoga practices, often yoga simply serves as a catchall for all types of meditation and stretching-based exercises. It is this catch-all definition that I am most interested in exploring. Yoga is a loaded word. Today, adding it as a description to any activity connotes myriad abstract concepts:

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[5] The spelling of Tantrik here reflects the usage in the early 20th century. Later in the century, the common spelling appears as Tantric or Tantra.

[6] Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* (London; New York: Continuum, 2004)

spiritual, meditative, centered, wise, feminine, fit, flexible, wealthy. In the past, however, yoga has evoked other types of concepts that reflect the ways in which yoga teachers presented their practice and address the media's response. This generalized view of yoga allows us to see the ways in which yoga evolved not only in practice, but also in outsiders' understanding of yoga, providing us a picture of the development of yoga in the United States in terms of broader cultural shifts.[7]

Thus, in examining the development of yoga in the United States, we must move beyond the overly simple literal translation of yoga toward an understanding that recognizes that yoga in the United States operates through a lens of Orientalist fantasy and at the same time is shaped by cultural, social, and historically specific events and locations. This dynamic historical approach fills a gap in current literature on yoga in the United States. In more popular work on the subject, such as *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America* and *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation - How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*, the authors provide broad chronological and bibliographic information on an extensive number of yogis who have influenced the myriad yoga practices in the United States. In their attempts at breadth, however, these authors tend to view yoga as a varied, but containable, import to the United States that Americans adopt, but do not necessarily influence. These authors also

[7] For a full discussion of the difficulty of defining broad spiritual practices see Thomas Tweed "Marking Religion's Boundaries: Constitutive Terms, Orienting Tropes, and Exegetical Fussiness" *History of Religions*, 44. No. 3 (February 2005), 252-276. My choice to maintain a broad definition of yoga, and avoid "exegetical fussiness." in the introduction stems from the inclusion of a variety of historical periods and yoga practices discussed in this dissertation.

pay only cursory attention to the historical conditions surrounding the development of yoga in India, instead subscribing to an abstract, ahistorical definition of yoga.

Academic work on the subject of yoga provides vastly more detail and analysis, but largely focuses on the development of a transnational yoga based primarily in India rather than Western practitioners' interpretation of yoga for an American audience. The greatest scholarly interventions in historicizing yoga in India have come from John Alter, Elizabeth DeMichelis, and John Singleton. Alter's *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Science and Philosophy* produces a history of how yoga developed into a physical health practice based on changing ideas about science and the body taking place in the West. Alter importantly historicizes the practice of yoga in India in an effort to debunk the view that yoga, and by extension India, is an atemporal, spiritual, culturally-fossilized practice.[8] In a similar vein DeMichelis's *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* considers the role of Western ideas about occultism and individualized spirituality played in creating "modern postural yoga" as understood today.[9] Singleton's *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* adds to DeMichelis' and Alter's work, by exploring the reasons why *asanas* [physical postures] were ignored and then reincorporated into yoga practices today.[10] Singleton's work shows clearly the interplay of colonial rule in the advocacy of *asanas* in India and the exportation of that practice to a transnational stage. In a more contemporary analysis of

[8] Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[9] De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga*, 6.
[10] Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice. (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

yoga, anthropologist Sarah Strauss' *Positioning Yoga* provides ethnographic research on practitioners of Swami Sivananda's Divine Life Society in Germany, the United States, and India. Methodologically different than other scholarly works on yoga, Strauss's work emphasizes the cross-cultural development of yoga in specific locations. In this dissertation I seek to bridge the gap between the historical scholarly attention paid to yoga in India and the popular writing about yoga in the United States. By narrowing the scope of this project to consider only Western-born yoga instructors' efforts to teach yoga to Americans, I am better able to explicate the transcultural production of yoga in America.

Methodology and Larger Analytical Framework

In order to gain a fuller picture of the development of yoga for an American audience in the United States, I have focused on the intersection of transnationalism and local political, cultural, and social concerns in the United States that shaped both the practice of yoga and its reception in large media outlets. This approach takes into consideration the interconnectedness of the American experience of yoga in regard not only to a specific practice, but also the practice's role in the larger international, cultural context of the case studies in this dissertation. The emphasis on the transnational in this dissertation arose from a perceived absence of academic work that examined popular understanding of yoga in America in terms that consider both its development in India and its adaptation for an American audience. Due to scant archival material, I have utilized the available primary texts written by the Western yogis covered in this dissertation, as well as reporting in local and national newspapers on the yoga

communities at various points in time.[11] The necessity of this choice has shaped the methodological approach of my research, leading me to more carefully examine the larger cultural power structures related to gender, class, race, sexuality, empire building, and colonialism.

In working within such broad categories when studying yoga in the United States, core issues related to cultural ownership, appropriation, and authenticity continually emerge. Destabilizing the term yoga via a historical approach makes it highly variable across time and space. Additionally, as the case studies presented here illuminate, practitioners in the United States have viewed yoga in such nebulous terms that they easily pour their own meanings and intentions into their practices. George Lipsitz in *Dangerous Crossroads* disparages acts of cultural appropriation, but the idea of appropriation suggests that there is an authentic "owned" culture that solely belongs to the originator of the practice.[12] In the case of modern yoga, however, because it developed from *The Yoga Sutras* and American and British influences, the issue of the relative authenticity of different yoga practices rings hollow. Cultural practices such as yoga do not exist in a static, hermetically-sealed state above the changing shape of the world. Thus, my goal is not to chastise historical actors for their broad interpretations of yoga, but to elucidate the ways social conditions in the United States informed how teachers present yoga to an American audience.

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[11] Preservation of primary sources related to yoga in America are largely absent from archives. Much of what was saved are schedules and news clippings about studios.

[12] George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place,* (New York: Verso, 1997).

That said, a recurrent theme throughout this dissertation is the power dynamic implicit in the Western interpretation of yoga for an American audience. This criticism highlights a tension in yoga in the United States. On one hand, yoga practitioners in the U.S. have, until relatively recently, tested the limits of social acceptability in an American context, but in a global context, they still exercise a position of power over the cultural production of former colonial states. Though dealing with different populations and cultural forms, Philip Deloria and Eric Lott address the political and cultural complications that emerge when white Americans adopt aspects of minority cultures in America. Both scholars address the tension in the methods white Americans utilize to empowered themselves by acting as the "other." DeLoria and Lott complicate these actions, arguing that is not merely mimicry, but a way of creating a new liminal identity. The tensions surrounding authenticity and identity formation inherent in cultural borrowing in the understanding of yoga relate to the larger politics of a colonial worldview, wherein who has the authority to construct "authentic" yoga which often worked to obfuscate unequal power relations between the West and the East. The factors that allow various American subcultures to challenge hegemonic discourses in the U.S. when seen in a global perspective take on a troubling colonial view. This perception of power, along with actual political and economic power, enabled the yoga practitioners discussed in this dissertation to embrace yoga to fit their own needs, without considering why they felt comfortable self-selecting aspects of yoga to embrace or reject.[13]

[13] For interesting discussions on racial masquerades and their implications see: Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1993)Philip DeLoria,*Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) and Sunaina Maira, "Belly

This dissertation's primary focus is to understand popular representations and forms of yoga both as transcultural and historically-specific. Yoga, as taught by Westerners to Americans at various historical moments, is continually fractured through what Arjun Appadurai calls mediascapes disseminate information in a global environment. The abundance of these images, even in the late-nineteenth century, creates an amalgam of information that cannot be neatly contained. When considering popular understandings of yoga in America, this dissertation also addresses the larger, messier, and often more problematic understanding of the East from a Western perspective. Often, Americans' understanding of yoga results in the blurring of "realistic and fictional landscapes" that, when perceived at a large physical and historical distance, lead to the "construct[ion of] imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects."[14] In this case, the imagined world of yoga reflects not only contemporary mediascapes at any time, but also what we could perhaps call historioscapes, which speak to the continued recreation of knowledge based on past historical orders in cross-cultural contexts. Understanding of yoga at a given moment not only relies on contemporary information, but also carries with it a history shaped by Orientalist discourse and colonial power arrangements that continue to resonate.

American popular views of Eastern spirituality have often been couched in the language of timelessness, meditativeness, open-mindedness, peacefulness, and enlightenment. The ideological implications of these adjectives are tied to what Edward

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Dancing: Arab-Face, Orientalist Feminism, and U.S. Empire," *American Quarterly* 60.2 (June 2008), 317 - 345.

[14] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 35.

Said calls an Orientalist discourse.[15] Orientalism, as it relates to yoga in the United States, is not merely about creating knowledge of the East in the West but, as Mari Yoshihara has argued, it is about understanding Asian cultural products that "emerged out of the existing discourse of Orientalism and contributed to the increasingly systematized and institutionalized body of knowledge and representation of Asia."[16] That said, a strict interpretation of Said's Orientalism ignores the cultural exchange that occurs in the colonial context, where colonizer and colonized create new cultural spaces that are not simply places of subjugation but of new exchange. Said, and those who have, in an attempt to explore discourse of power in the colonial state, mistakenly re-essentialized culture, unintentionally cement rather than collapse discourse about the "Orient."[17] Similarly, by deploying Orientalist language around practices like yoga, the speaker implicitly fixes culture in a static state rather than recognizing that the relationship

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[15] For more on this see the seminal text Said's *Orientalism*, but also the more U.S. focused and historical minded work of Catherine Albanese *The Spirituality of the American Transcendentalists : Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Amos Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, and Henry David Thoreau*, (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1988); Robert Ellwood *Eastern Spirituality in America: Selected Writings*, *Sources of American Spirituality*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); Carl T. Jackson *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations*, (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1981); Kimberly Lau, *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), Thomas Tweed, T*he American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture & the Limits of Dissent*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[16] Yoshihara, *Embracing the East,* 152.

[17] In more recent and more developed work that engages with Orientalism, Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) explore Orientalism after World War II. Both authors argue that the kind of Orientalism that exists in America following WWII differs from the Orientalism that existed prior to the war. This, what McAlister calls, "post-orientalist" moment is defined not by marked and unchangeable racial and cultural difference; instead it is a moment when the U.S. cultural industry attempted to highlight, embrace, and bridge cultural differences.

between Asia and the United States as part of an ongoing process of hybridization. For Asian American studies scholar David Palumbo-Liu, hybridity "designates a specific, temporalized dialectic, viewed not so much as America 'absorbing' the foreign (in the usual model of assimilation), as it is at once an integrative and *reformulative* model, in which both the 'domestic' and 'foreign' are constantly revised."[18] Palumbo-Liu's integrative and reformulative model is crucial to understanding the development of yoga in the United States.

Despite recent work on the hybridity of culture, the static ideas about the nature of the East stem from a history of colonial power relations that scholar Ann McClintock has explained via three key ideas: panoptical time, anachronistic space, and abjection. The overarching applicability of McClintock's work on Victorian colonial encounters in this dissertation stem from an attempt to position yoga in the United States as part of a historioscape or "deep time" that extends understanding of the relationship of colonial power in the United States beyond direct political, economic, and social ties.[19] Therefore, applying McClintock's framework creates a possibility of reorienting understandings of yoga in the U.S. through the filter of colonial, Orientalist discourse surrounding yoga and India.

Americans have viewed yoga, like India itself and other cultural exports from the country, through panoptical time. McClintock defines panoptical time as "the image of

[18] David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier,* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 18.
[19] In considering U.S. history in these terms my work has been influenced by the work of Ann Stoler, in particular her essay "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *The Journal of American History*, 88 no. 3 (December, 2003): 829-865.

global history consumed - at a glance - in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility."[20] In the late nineteenth century, panoptical time solidified a hierarchical vision of humanity, in which men were racially ranked and women entirely absent from the social order. McClintock argued that human progress became little more than an easily understood image of biological and social improvement that would progress toward the pinnacle of civilization encapsulated in Anglo-Saxon manhood. Kirin Narayan, who has written widely on American representations of Indian spirituality, agrees with Milton Singer, when he writes, "Americans tended to take over and exaggerate…the prevailing European images of India."[21] This inclination of Americans to overstate European images of colonial holdings speaks not only to Western views of the colonized and formerly colonized nations, but also to the United States' fraught relationship with other Western nation-states in a colonial and post-colonial world. It is almost as if through these exaggerated images, the United States creates colonizer-by-proxy syndrome, which extends beyond an Occident/Orientalist break to create a multilayered involvement between nation-states. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Americans with a passing interest in India maintained a colonial snapshot of the country as a place of spiritual growth and economic and political backwardness. In this formation, India was limited to a spectacle of mystical

[20] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (Routledge, 1995), 37.
[21] Kirin Narayan, *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); and Kirin Narayan, "Refractions of the Field at Home: American Representations of Hindu Holy Men in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Cultural Anthropology* 8 no. 4 (1993), 478; citing Milton Singer "Passage to More than India" in *When a Great Tradition Modernizes,* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972),11-38.

enchantment and amazing feats of physicality through yoga, rather than a dynamic, growing modern society. These images, created and viewed at a distance, served the interest of the viewer, not the viewed. In panoptical time, Americans could borrow the necessary spectacles to apply to their own biological and social improvement, a borrowing that resulted in an unintentional re-inscription of colonial power, allowing Americans to retain a level of abstract power over Indian culture by denying its modernization or role in the current global economy, and thereby creating a hierarchical culture exchange.

In relationship to panoptical time, India also functioned as an anachronistic space in the colonizers' worldview. McClintock argues, "Colonized people - like women and working class in the metropolis - do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic human, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency."[22] McClintock ties together the experience of racialized others in the colonial context with that of women and laborers in the metropole. Importantly, McClintock incorporates an imagined geographic space, wherein women and the colonized exist without agency and are therefore seen as unable to make real contributions to the project of progress.[23] Thus, contemporary India remained, for many Americans, an anachronistic space, economically, socially, and politically backwards but also in possession of ancient wisdom that could improve and enrich Western life. This geographic distance between the United States and India was

[22] McClintock, *Imperial Leather,* 30.
[23] For a similar argument on the relationship between the exotic other and women in a more recent historical moment see: Micaela DiLeonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity*, *Women in Culture and Society*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

compounded by the limited presence of an Indian diaspora in the U.S. Lacking even secondary contact with India through the presence of immigrants in the U.S., Americans' information regarding India remained filtered through a colonial lens.[24] When viewed through panoptical time, as it almost always must be, India as an anachronistic space reinforced unequal participation in the projects of modernization. Even in a post-colonial environment, India's position as an independent nation became trapped in a particular historical moment in which Westerners believed they could borrow the artifacts that suited their needs, without concern for the real political repercussions for India or Indians. Both panoptical time and anachronistic space highlighted the West's perception of itself in an invisible position of power, choosing to look and borrow at will without any real threat to its social, political, or economic power.

Whereas panoptical time and anachronistic space informed popular American perceptions of India, McClintock's "paradox of abjection" explains the vestigial anxieties that the effects of adopting yoga in the West could have on society. In considering the former colonial states as abject objects, "the abject is everything the subject seeks to expunge in order to become social; it is also a symptom of the failure of this ambition."[25]

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[24] Also looking at Sucheng Chan, *Asian Californians*, *Golden State Series* (San Francisco: MTL/Boyd & Fraser, 1991), Bill Ong Hing, *Defining America through Immigration Policy*, *Mapping Racisms* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990*, *Asian America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American: Indian Immigrants and the Cultures of Citizenship* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). Additionally, it should be noted that the state of Indian immigration should be dealt with carefully, as many of the early Indian immigrants to the U.S. were Sikhs and not practicing yoga of any kind. Harold Robert Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds; American Images of China and India* (New York: J. Day Co., 1958) shows that up until the 1950s at the very least, Americans knew very little about India and tended to conflate different traditions that occurred in South Asia as "Indian" or "Hindu."

[25] McClintock, *Imperial Leather,* 71.

While some Westerners sought to cast off their role as colonizer and shed associations with the colonized in the name of progress, others who chose to adopt practices such as yoga pushed at the boundaries of acceptable behavior in the United States regarding class, race, gender, and sexuality. Looking to the East in the form of yoga practice functioned on some level as an awareness and embrace of the abject. In doing so, Western yogis still maintained a position of privilege when borrowing from other cultures in a magpie fashion. Furthermore, when Westerners adopted Eastern practices, they ran the risk of reabsorbing too much of the East, propelling it somehow backward and highlighting the failure of the narrative of progress.

Additionally, the intertwining of the feminized Orient and the gendered and racialized experiences in the United States allows us to see the ways in which an embrace of timeless India created a tense adoption of a transcultural and transgendered space. In many ways, at different points in the twentieth century, white American women used yoga to satisfy a desire for power or control via the adoption and mastery over a foreign practice it is based not in the material conditions of women in Asia, but on the Occident's construction of an imaginary and idealized "Oriental" woman. According to media scholar John Fiske, "Popular culture is always a culture of conflict, it always involves the struggle to make social meanings that are in the interests of the subordinates and that are not those preferred by the dominant ideology."[26] Western yogis adopting yoga at different times have resisted mainstream U.S. ideas about gender, spirituality, class, sexuality, and domesticity within the United States; however, through this process, these

[26] John Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, (New York: Routledge,1989), ebook, 2.

practitioners have exercised their own kind of power over another culture informed by a colonial order reinforced by racist immigration policies and attitudes within the United States. While creating alternative yoga communities subverted dominant discourse of gender, culture and power, the complicated relationship between colonial understandings of India that lingered in the post-colonial era also reaffirmed yoga as a feminine practice in the minds of the majority of Americans. These three tools speak to the ways in which colonial dynamics functioned through the practice of yoga in the United States. Creating an often unacknowledged and unbalanced relationship between the U.S. and India, Americans adopting Eastern practices were often actively challenging patriarchal order in the U.S., but at the same time reasserting Americans' superior political and cultural place in the global hierarchy through the ways they adopted yoga.

In addition to illuminating the colonial worldview, McClintock's framework allows us to see the how Westerners practicing yoga viewed it as an antidote to modernity. T. Jackson Lears argues, "The avant-garde preoccupation with authentic experience, like that of the medievalists and Orientalists, has frequently blended with a sleeker version of modern culture stressing self-fulfillment and immediate gratification."[27] Here we can see that the "anti-modern" is not actually opposed to the "modern." Instead, adopting "anti-modern" practices offered people an alternative lifestyle in a modern society; highlighting the inescapability of modernity even when presented with a practice like yoga, has oft been framed as a primitive antidote to modernity. However, rather than view yoga as an antidote to modernity, as a primitive

[27] Lears, *No Place of Grace,* xix.

practice that acts in opposition to Western progress, we would be better served to see yoga as an alternative practice that was a part of the story of modernity and progress.[28] This perspective creates a space to view yoga as a hybridization of simpler living that serves to improve the modern body and mind in a society moving forward.

Finally, the increasing popularity of yoga at certain moments in U.S. history reflects the choices made by various yoga teachers in how they presented yoga to an American audience. As John Fisk has argued, "If the cultural commodities or texts do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meaning of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not be made popular."[29] Even at moments when yoga was confined to smaller groups of practitioners, particularly prior to the 1950s, yoga caught the attention of the news media. Americans deemed yoga newsworthy in the early twentieth century because reporters presented an exoticized view of the practice that paralleled the country's anxieties about foreignness, the occult, and sexuality, and also titillated the American audience because of the wealth and exclusivity of those participating in yoga communities.[30] Elsewhere, Fiske argues that news should provoke discussion, making people participants in the process of information.[31] In the examples in this dissertation, I view the news about yoga differently and more narrowly. Given the political restrictions and circulation of ideas about the East, media coverage of yoga contributed to an exoticized fantasy about yoga

[28] See: Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).
[29] Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, 2.
[30] See Di Leonardo *Exotics at Home.*
[31] Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, 157.

and its potential dangers, the vestiges of which lay in the colonial discourse explained above. For the first half of the twentieth century, relatively little information circulated about yoga from practitioners themselves, which allowed mainstream media outlets to shape popular understanding of yoga. It was only people inside the organizations who could occasionally protest the representations of their groups, but even those protests were not widely distributed and did little to combat more popular representations of yoga, be they good or bad.

The issues of post-colonial power structures, gender dynamics, and concerns about modernity are overarching themes within this work, but each chapter pays much closer attention to specific historical periods, practitioners, and cultural locations. As stated earlier, I have focused on white Western yoga teachers who adopt yoga for an American audience; by doing so I am starting at a later period than most histories of yoga in America. Often individuals will cite early references to yoga philosophies in the Transcendental writing of Henry David Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson as a starting point to understanding yoga in the United States.[32] More often, scholars frame Swami

[32] Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Catherine Albanese, *The Spirituality of the American Transcendentalists: Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Amos Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, and Henry David Thoreau*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988); Aldrich Christie, *Thoreau as World Traveler*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); Walter Harding and Carl Bode, eds. *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, (New York: New York University Press, 1958); Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Susan McWilliams, "Thoreau on Body and Soul," in Jack Turner, ed., *A Political Companion to Henry David Thoreau*,(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); A. K. B. Pillai, *Transcendental Self : A Comparative Study of Thoreau and the Psycho-Philosophy of Hinduism and Buddhism*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*, (New York: Knopf, 1988); and Robert D. Richardson, *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

Vivekananda's presentation at the Chicago's Columbian World Exposition in 1893 as the origin for the practice of yoga in the United States.

In Transcendentalists' work, particularly Emerson and Thoreau, one sees an emergent interest in Hinduism and Buddhism that marks an early positive understanding of yoga in the United States. According to Carl T. Jackson, Emerson "was the first important American to incorporate strains of Oriental thought and to seek a reconciliation between Eastern and Western ideals," but it was Thoreau who embraced the idea of yoga more explicitly.[33] Stating in a letter to a friend, "the yogin, absorbed in contemplation, contributes in his degree to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts, as animating original matter.' To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogin."[34] Though Thoreau's writing marks a starting point of American interpretation of yoga, he did not attempt to teach anyone how to be a yogi; rather, he embraced yoga as a potential description for the way he lived his life.[35] Generally, we can see Transcendentalists' interest in the East as one of the milestones of increasing interest in Eastern spirituality, not as the beginning of teaching yoga in the United States.

The early interest in the East espoused by the Transcendentalists marked the beginning of an increasing fascination with the Eastern spirituality, aesthetics, and culture. As Mari Yoshihara argues, between 1890 and 1920 "the material culture of

[33] Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, 46.
[34] Quoted in Walter Harding and Carl Bode, eds., *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, 251.
[35] Albanese, *The Spirituality of the American Transcendentalists*, 8.

Orientalism packaged the mixed interests Americans had about Asia – Asia as seductive, aesthetic, refined culture, and Asia as foreign, premodern, Other – and made them into unthreatening objects for collection and consumption."[36] Consumption of the "other" also occurred Vivekananda's talks in Chicago at the World Fair. As addressed in greater detail in chapter one, Vivekananda became a national celebrity for his discussions about yoga for an American audience. He taught yoga to Americans and intentionally adopted his rhetoric for an American audience, but I do not include his teachings at length because he remained a foreigner. Vivekananda came to the United States primarily to raise money for his own religious and political projects in India, and never intended to settle in the U.S.. Vivekananda remained an unassimilable figure in the United States. His status as a permanent outsider made him, for the popular press and even some of his followers, a safe, consumable curiosity that did not pose any threat to dominant ideologies. In contrast, white Westerners, particularly in the early part of the twentieth century, who practiced and taught yoga fell into a different category: potentially socially disruptive forces. Yoga teachers in this category challenged their own culture and worked to spread an alternate vision to other Americans in ways that unsettled contemporary reporters. Even though the perceived, potential threat of yoga in the United States waned considerably over the course of the twentieth century, yoga teachers through the twenty-first century have negotiated century-old ideas about the role of yoga in the United States.[37]

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[36]Yoshihara, Embracing the East, 17-18.

[37] Though not covered in detail in this dissertation, current news on yoga has focused on the Christian Right's backlash against yoga being taught in schools.

Chapter Summaries

I have divided this dissertation into five chapters that cover the period between the 1890s and the 2000s. Each chapter focuses on a yoga community that garnered attention beyond its immediate circle of practitioners and followers. In chapter one, I examine the adoption of Râja yoga at Katherine Tingley's Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. The original Theosophical organization, led by Madame Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William H. Judge, brought considerable attention to Eastern religions to the Western world. Though the Theosophists' roots lay in mid-nineteenth century spiritualism, the practice quickly expanded to include a mélange of Eastern beliefs that reconstructed to form the base of Theosophical beliefs. Olcott, in particular, expanded Americans' understandings of Buddhist and Hindu beliefs in the United States by supporting indigenous religious revivals in South Asia at a time when British imperialists, and by extension the Western world, decried Eastern religions as the purview of heathens and idolaters. The Theosophists, in contrast to the views of the dominant Eastern religions, promoted South Asian religious beliefs and their right to political autonomy. The Theosophists' cosmology challenged prevailing views of the East, but at the same time supported a vision of Eastern spirituality that reinforced the general opinion of its timelessness and universal applicability.

When Katherine Tingley established her offshoot of the Theosophists in California, she explicitly incorporated the language of yoga without actually teaching any yoga. Tingley is included here not only because of the enormous influence the Theosophists had on Americans' understanding of the East, but because her inclusion of

yoga in her Râja Yoga School sparked a public dialogue about the potentially harmful effects of "yoga" on Americans. To illuminate this point, I have focused on an incident following the Spanish-American War in which Tingley brought Cuban children to her Râja Yoga School. Through the ensuing scandal involving blocked immigration, investigations, and midnight escapes, I explore the ways in which attitudes about empire expansion intersected with anxieties about foreign influences from the East on domestic arrangements.

In chapter two, I turn my attention to Pierre Bernard, who gained notoriety for his interest in Tantric yoga in both California and New York in the 1920s. Pierre Bernard started his career in San Francisco, where he founded the International Tantrik Order, before moving to New York City to open a yoga studio. In New York, Bernard began actively recruiting young, already physically flexible, chorus girls to help teach classes and maintain his studio in exchange for room and board. The influx of young girls following a charismatic leader to bend and breathe in varying states of undress inspired the New York media to begin writing about the "Omnipotent Oom." Compounding the media's interest in Bernard was his ability to attract a wealthy clientele, most notably members of the Vanderbilt family. With these patrons' help, Bernard purchased property in Nyack and established the Clarkstown Country Club, an ashram but one that included a circus, a dog track, a gym, and a theater.

Bernard's most influential moments came in New York, first inspiring scandalous headlines about the connections between sexuality and yoga in the 1920s.[38] As he became more established and his interest in sexuality became more widely accepted in certain social circles in New York, his reputation shifted from that of an "Oriental" charlatan to that of a businessman and teacher of techniques on how to live a more effective life. As the economy declined in the 1930s, the ways in which Bernard presented yoga shifted to reflect these changing circumstances, as did the representation of Bernard in the media. This case study shows that even over a relatively short period, interpretations of yoga, and perceptions of those interpretations, evolved with the social and economic changes occurring in the United States.

In a departure from the first two chapters, the third chapter focuses on a yoga teacher who spent a prolonged sojourn in India before coming to the United States to teach yoga. Indra Devi led a transient life prior to emigrating to the United States in 1946. Born in Latvia, she moved to Berlin, then India, and finally China, before establishing a yoga school in Hollywood, California. In the 1950s, Devi began to publish such influential yoga texts as *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (1955) and *Yoga for Americans: A Complete Six Weeks' Course for Home Practice* (1959). Between the first three decades of the twentieth century and the 1950s, World War II and its immediate aftermath brought on a reshuffling of global political and economic power.

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[38] Kathryn Grover, *Fitness in American Culture : Images of Health, Sport, and the Body, 1830-1940* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 1989). More pertinent to this section will be Jennifer Smith Maguire, *Fit for Consumption : Sociology and the Business of Fitness* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008). Jennifer Smith Maguire, "Body Lessons: Fitness Publishing and the Cultural Production of the Fitness Consumer," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 37, no. 3-4 (2002). And Jane Arthurs and Jean Grimshaw, *Women's Bodies: Discipline and Transgression* (London ; New York: Cassell, 1999).

Decolonization and the Cold War altered the international landscape, and as Christina Klein has shown, changed how U.S. citizens perceived themselves as global citizens. Embracing the east very differently than in the 1890s, the U.S. began the slow process of relaxing immigration laws and encouraging its citizens to learn and engage, not merely superficially collect, information about Asia. I argue that through the use of mass media, mainly books and television, practicing yoga became less dangerous and more mainstream as a part of this larger trend of Cold War Orientalism.

Devi's success reveals a kind of acceptance and expansion of yoga in the United States in relation to wider geopolitical concerns. In chapter four, I turn my attention to the late 1960s, which marshaled a different image yoga, one that moved away from the domesticated image of yoga toward one that emphasized spirituality, exoticism, danger, and esotericism. Practitioners like Paramahansa Yogananda, who lived and practiced in the U.S. from 1920 until his death in 1952, overlapped chronologically with Tingley, Bernard, and Devi, but his greatest influence occurred posthumously with the renewed interest in his *An Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946). The increasing focus on yoga in the 1960s is the focus of this chapter, in which I examine how Swami Kriyananda, a follower of Yogananda, absorbed the cultural shifts in attitudes about spirituality, drugs, and capitalism into his ashram at the Ananda Village in Nevada City, California. In part, yoga's linkage to the counterculture repositioned its image toward the more esoteric and dangerous elements of the Tingley and Bernard period. While Kriyananda responded to those interests and desires, at the Ananda Village he also acknowledged the limits of creating a completely divergent lifestyle from the rest of the United States. Through this

recognition, Kriyananda insisted that his intentional community and the kind of yoga he taught retain strong ties to the broader U.S. culture.

Despite Kriyananda's efforts, the New Age label remained firmly affixed to yoga in the popular imagination until the late 1990s, when interest in physicality and spirituality in the U.S. allowed for more competing images of yoga to exist. During the post-Cold War period of the late 1990s, the U.S. found itself in a period of increasing globalization, faster technology, and more rapid commodification of culture. In addition, an increasingly neoliberal attitude accompanied these changes and manifested in the production of understandings of yoga through the company lululemon athletica and Elizabeth Gilbert's bestselling memoir *Eat, Pray, Love.*

lululemon athletica (1998-present) is one of the most popular and lucrative yoga brands in the United States among white, economically privileged, female yogis. In chapter five, I explore the connection between increasing athleticism, commodification, and globalization through corporate history of lululemon. lululemon offers technologically-advanced, expensive clothing, which they sell along with a cute manifesto that asks customers to remember "friends are more important than money," and "don't trust that an old age pension will be sufficient."[40] This company also provides a disturbing view of women; one that rips apart feminists, claiming that working women are the cause of high divorce rates and increased occurrences of breast cancer,

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[40] Chip Wilson, *The Lululemon Manifesto, accessed September 1, 2009* http://www.lululemon.com/about/culture.

while claiming to champion and empower women. This mix of feel-good sentiment with a practical approach to capitalism defines lululemon's manifesto.

On the surface, the memoir *Eat, Pray, Love* may seem like an odd companion to lululemon, but Elizabeth Gilbert's book, while focused on a personal and more spiritual understanding of yoga, retains the same neoliberal impulses of lululemon's corporate rhetoric. These two pieces taken together reveal a small portion of the larger picture of yoga in the United States today, but because of the ubiquitous presence of these two artifacts, they also reveal, in part, some of the underlying reasons for the immense popularity of yoga today.

Through these case studies, this dissertation sets out to sketch the changing presentations and responses of yoga in the United States from the 1890s to the present. By considering the implications of both global flows of culture and the intersection of personal identity with social change in the United States, my goal is to present yoga not just within specific lineages emerging unadulterated from India, but as a set of dynamic practices that have absorbed and reflected cultural changes in the United States.

Chapter One: 'Tingley's Spookery': The Intersection of Empire Building, Orientalism and Yoga at the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society

On December 6, 1902, immigration officials at Ellis Island received a letter from the Treasury department informing them that the eleven Cuban children they had been detaining since November 1, 1902 could now enter the United States. On the surface, the terms of their detention were nebulous and unusual, since the United States had virtual sovereignty over the nominally independent Cuba, per the Platt Amendment (1901), but it was not the children's nationality as much as their destination within the United States that had caught immigration officials' attention. The children had come to the U.S. to attend the Râja Yoga School run by the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society (UBTS) in Point Loma, California. Upon hearing the news, A.G. Spalding, a devoted Theosophist and part owner of the Spalding sporting goods company, chartered the steamboat Jerry E. Moore and, under the cover of darkness, ferried the children to Pennsylvania Station in Jersey City, New Jersey. Spalding organized the hasty departure to New Jersey in an effort to keep the children out of New York State where the Gerry Society, which had entered the initial petition to have the children deported, retained a degree of jurisdiction.[1] After safely arriving in New Jersey, the children, each

[1] Elbridge Thomas Gerry co-founded the Gerry Society after having served as legal counsel to the American Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty of Animals. For an interesting look at the founding of the Gerry Society see: Lela B. Costin, "Unraveling the Mary Ellen Legend: Origins of the 'Cruelty' Movement," Social Service Review 65, No. 2 (June, 1991): 203-223.

accompanied by an individual guard, boarded a private train car to take them to California, where they would take up residence at the Râja Yoga School as "lotus buds."[2]

The media frenzy surrounding the case of the Cuban "lotus buds" revealed much about media perceptions of yoga in the early 20th century and how Katherine Tingley, the leader of the American offshoot of the Theosophical Society, the UBTS, reinterpreted yoga to fit her larger Theosophical mission: to improve society through a union with ancient, spiritual power. Furthermore, by incorporating yoga into Theosophy, which at the time was viewed by many Americans as nothing more than spiritual hucksterism in the same lineage as Spiritualism and other supernatural pursuits, many began to conflate yoga with esoteric, 'Oriental' practices simultaneously viewed as both absurd and threatening. Not simply a scandalous case surrounding a small group of children, the debate over the Cuban children's safety became a virtual referendum on one of the most well-known yoga centers in the U.S. run by and, primarily, for Americans: the Râja Yoga School at Point Loma (also known as Lomaland). At the end of the nineteenth century, the energetic and charismatic Tingley led the UBTS. Tingley followed Theosophical beliefs, but also incorporated Râja Yoga, "royal union," at the heart of her work. According to Sri Swami Sivananda, "Râja Yoga is the king of Yogas. It concerns directly with the mind. In this Yoga there is no struggling with Prana or

[2] "'Lotus Buds' Start for California Home," *New York Times,* December 8, 1902, accessed January 25, 2013, http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F40912FE3D5E12738DDDA10894DA415B828CF1D3.

physical body."[3] In contrast to the clear and prescriptive definition of Râja Yoga described by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* that involved eight specific steps and a variety of subsets to achieve enlightenment, Tingley treated Râja Yoga as "an ever-changing set of methods with some continuity based on moral self-control and other traits in character development," including " moral excellence, internalizing the consequences of reincarnation, deep appreciation for beauty, and profound compassion for all living things."[4] At other times, Tingley used Râja Yoga to mean only "the balance of the physical, mental, and moral faculties."[5] Tingley's vague definitions of Râja Yoga revealed a level of unfamiliarity with the core texts of yoga and, more importantly, one of the first articulations of an American interpretation of yoga. Tingley, like many Americans after her, used yoga as a conduit for her own goals and desires; eschewing any concern with "authenticity," Tingley utilized yoga to achieve the social and educational goals of the UBTS.

By focusing on Western reinterpretations of yoga at the end of the nineteenth century, rather than on gurus or swamis from India, one can better understand the methods by which Westerners used yoga to make sense of and engage with their

[3] Sri Swami Sivananda Râja Yoga Last accessed May 24, 2012 http://www.dlshq.org/teachings/rajayoga.htm

[4] Michael Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle: Point Loma Theosophists and American Culture*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 86.

[5] Katherine Tingley, *The Life at Point Loma*, (Point Loma, CA: The Aryan Theosophical Press, 1909), accessed January 24, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=PM4VAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+life+at+Point+Loma&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c48BUd0mo_rZBYbpgPgI&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false, 5.

contemporary society. [6] Katherine Tingley interpreted and taught yoga as a system that could improve individuals and society while responding to contemporary national debates on gender roles and views of empire specific to the United States at that time. In addition to looking at Tingley's later work, this chapter examines the rise of Theosophy and its engagement in the discussions regarding women's role in America and changing understandings of the United States' position in the world at the end of the nineteenth century. Emerging from the Theosophical movement, Tingley moved to southern California to create a new age via the practice of Râja yoga. At the height of her popularity in the 1900s-1910s she also reached the height of her infamy. A series of sensational and highly critical articles led to a prolonged libel suit against the Times Mirror Company and the well-publicized immigration scandal of the eleven Cuban children in 1902. Propelled by the history of Theosophy, Katherine Tingley, and the beginnings of the Râja Yoga School, tensions surrounding powerful women, Asian religions, and empire building at the beginning of the twentieth century critically shaped Americans' understanding of yoga into the coming century.[7] Through its association

[6] Whereas other work on yoga in America at the end of the 19th century have focused on the role of Swami Vivekananda in popularizing yoga in the United States, he will remain a background figure here. While Vivekananda's spectacular reception at the World Parliament of Religions at the Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 was important, the small number of followers he personally accumulated in the U.S. and his role in promoting yoga as a part of daily life is relatively small. Furthermore, his tour in the United States was a means of generating money for his work in India, not to spread yoga in the United States. Additionally, his actual time in the U.S. was short, staying from 1893-1897 and then again from 1899-1902. While his legacy can be found in the Vedanta societies that sprung up around the country, for the purpose of this dissertation I will focus on the Theosophical Society's interpretation and integration of yoga into their belief system. The American Theosophical Society capitalized on Vivekanda's teaching of Râja Yoga in the U.S. by establishing a permanent Râja Yoga school in San Diego, California.

[7] Other works look at Theosophy in the U.S., and not mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, include: Mary F. Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (1980): 207-31; Mary F.

with Theosophy, yoga in the United States became marked as an occult and dangerous practice that upset traditional gender, familial, and sexual roles.[8]

The Râja Yoga School shaped the popular images of yoga in the U.S. and employed yoga to create an idealized version of personhood, laden with ideals about gender performance and the construction of U.S. empire. This section examines the explicit connections to gender and the nation that occurred at the Râja Yoga School by examining popular discussions of those issues from the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875 to the decline of the Râja Yoga School in the 1910s.[9] While Tingley joined the Theosophical movement well after its founding, her work as one of its figureheads in the 1900s defines an important starting point in understanding her later relationship with yoga and her role as a spiritual leader. Additionally, in order to understand the Theosophical society's aims, one must consider the personal biography of

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Bednarowski, "Women in Occult America," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, eds. Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1983), 177-95; Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1980); Robert Ellwood, "The American Theosophical Synthesis," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, eds. Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1983), 111-34, Robert Ellwood and Catherine Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood': Women in the Theosophical Movement," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 68-87; Stephen Prothero, "From Spiritualism to Theosophy: 'Uplifting' a Democratic Tradition," *Religion and American Culture* 3 (Summer 1993): 197-216; James Santucci, "Women in the Theosophical Movement," *Explorations: Journal for Adventurous Thought* 9 (Fall 1990): 71-94; Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (New York: Schocken, 1995).

[8] These representations of yoga as practiced by the Theosophists were particularly influential because by the end of the nineteenth century there were fewer than 700 Indians living in the United States; a population which could not combat the circulation of negative popular images of Indians through Theosophical and other texts discussed below.

[9] The Râja Yoga School continued to exist, but its popularity waned significantly by the beginning of World War I and even by 1910 interest in the society had decreased sharply.

its co-founder, Madame Helena Petrnova Blavatsky (1831-1891), who remains to this day the most important author and spiritual leader of Theosophists.

A "Virtually Uncontrollable Girl:" Madame Blavatsky and Nineteenth Century Views of Women

Attitudes about women in the West informed the foundation of the Theosophical society; women constituted the most prominent leadership roles in the society, which attracted a majority of female followers. Madame Helena Petrnova Blavatsky, a co-founder of the Theosophical society and the main author of Theosophical texts *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), spent her childhood in Russia where she moved from relative to relative. Her family members considered her "quarrelsome, passionate, and unruly...virtually uncontrollable."[10] After Blavatsky's failed struggle to gain acceptance within her family she embarked on a disastrous and short-lived marriage at the age of seventeen. Not content to suffer in the marriage, she abandoned her husband and, by way of Constantinople, found herself in Europe where she continued to travel until the 1870s.

Like many notable women of the nineteenth century, Blavatsky's independence, mobility and, restlessness distanced her from the ideal versions of the contained, domesticated woman that society admired at the time. Even in the 1870s, early-nineteenth century views of the "cult of domesticity" influenced the idealized view of white women in which the perfect picture of womanly virtue consisted of purity, piety,

[10] Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 158.

submissiveness, and domesticity. *Godey's Lady's Book* (1836-1898), one of the most widely circulated and influential periodicals of the 1800s, perpetuated early nineteenth century ideas about women even as immigration, emancipation, and increased industrialization changed the way many women lived.[11] Madame Blavatsky, mobile and fiercely independent, challenged these notions by the very fact of her atypical decisions.

Despite, or perhaps because of, Blavatsky's abnormal views of propriety, she traveled among wealthier Westerners as an engaging and entertaining companion with very few financial resources. The independence Blavatsky exhibited signaled an unwelcome element of a larger shift in gender roles emerging for women: one eccentric, independent woman could entertain socially, but social conservatives feared all women behaving this way could only result in a dangerous collapse of civilization. In the early twentieth century, while middle class women maintained ideals of womanhood established in the nineteenth century, young, single, working class women in urban centers experienced far more independence and sexual freedom. By moving to cities without their families and earning their own money in urban factories, women freed themselves from the constraints of conservative views of idealized womanhood, allowing them to engage in the heterosocial amusements widely available in the cities, such as

[11] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820- 1860" *American Quarterly* 18 no. 2 (1966): 151-174; and Kathleen L. Endres, *Women's Periodicals in the United States: Consumer Magazines*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 115. Coincidentally Sara Hale, the long-time editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* believed Queen Victoria also the Empress of India to be an ideal figure of womanhood. Invoking an interesting point of power and imperialism in the woman who was otherwise charged with creating domestic perfection.

dance halls.[12] The rapidly expanding urban workforce and their changing lifestyles exerted influence on middle class views of women's roles that people in the vanguard incorporated into new understandings of sexuality and independence. These shifting attitudes would ultimately make it possible for Katherine Tingley to integrate more radical ideas about gender into her version of yoga and still attract an interested audience.

While Blavatsky's biography predates these evolving notions of women's roles, Tingley found herself embroiled in implicit debates about the proper behavior of women. As a fringe organization with a history of powerful female leaders, the media scrutinized the Râja Yoga School in a manner that indicated an underlying uneasiness with women's growing demand for increasing power and freedom, coupled with a fear of re-imagining domestic roles, which Tingley facilitated through yoga. In addition to concerns about Theosophy in general, critics called into question the sexual propriety of Tingley's organization on some level simply because it was led by a woman, and further because of her insistence on alternative living situations at the Râja Yoga School, such as disassociating children from their parents, separating husbands and wives, and Tingley's matchmaking efforts between wealthy residents at Point Loma. As early as 1900, women's sexuality had become more accepted among social theorists, but restraints on sexual behavior continued to be *de rigueur* among the middle class. The Râja Yoga

[12] I use the word autonomous here to distinguish the new factories and workshops in urban centers that did not relegate their young female work force to segregated dormitories and codes of conduct as in the earlier mills, such as the ones found in Lowell, Massachusetts. For changing roles of women workers from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century see: Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); and Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987).

School, which attracted a relatively affluent set of followers, straddled a position between maintaining conservative views of gender and sexuality and promoting progressive alternatives to those traditional views.[13]

In addition to the greater awareness of the sexualized body, women's bodies were re-imagined as athletically capable during this period, and Tingley incorporated moderate amounts of physical exercise into her yoga system. The women's physical culture movement that promoted calisthenics and bicycling for health contrasted the starkly constrained, corseted, neurasthenic Victorian woman. Blavatsky did not live to see this cultural shift, and the core texts and practices of the Theosophists reflect a higher valuation on the mind and spirit than the development of an athletic body. As a result, Tingley's incorporation of physical exercise at the Râja Yoga School arose independent of Blavatsky's writings. Without Blavatsky's guidance and because Tingley had little firsthand knowledge of yoga outside of secondary sources, the physical activity at the Râja Yoga School did not include *asanas.* Instead, Tingley incorporated simple activities such as walking and moderately difficult calisthenics popular in the U.S. at the time.[14] Even though Tingley did not promote rigorous physical activity, she did encourage her followers to wear loose fitting garments for better health and to allow for freedom of movement during daily exercises. However, the physical culture movement only marginally influenced the Râja Yoga School's practices. Tingley valued efforts to

[13] Janet Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
[14] As I'll explore in later chapters (2 and 3), the Western physical movement radically altered yoga in India during this time, but Tingley staying true to the Theosophical interests in the mind and spirit focused on the those issues in conjunction with social improvement over physical well-being.

achieve a higher level of consciousness via spiritual and intellectual development considerably more than physical activity. Despite the tertiary nature of physical exercise in the Râja Yoga School's mission, critics still questioned the use and display of bodies clothed in flowing white garments exercising in the hills above San Diego. For the California newspapers, the bodies on display at Point Loma served as a tangible warning that the Theosophists posed a threat to the 'proper' order of things in southern California.

Spiritualism and a Chance Meeting

The Râja Yoga School not only posed a threat because it challenged gender roles, but also because of Theosophy's origins in Spiritualism and esoteric beliefs that challenged mainstream Protestantism. In the process of creating Theosophy, Blavatsky maintained her childhood passion and unruliness, seeking opportunities for her own aggrandizement and deeper spiritual understanding throughout her adult life. These interests eventually led her to Cairo, Egypt in the 1870s, where Blavatsky first encountered Spiritualism. Spiritualism included a variety of people and decentralized organizations that believed in the ability to communicate with the dead. While largely derided as a series of elaborate hoaxes, many Spiritualists displayed sincere interest in a scientific approach to understanding spirits. Upon learning that a number of Spiritualists operated and enjoyed financial success and popularity in the United States, Blavatsky decided to emigrate, eventually becoming a U.S. citizen in 1873.

The seriousness with which Spiritualists approached their investigations grew from a desire to better understand the mysteries of the spiritual world and apply that

understanding to improve the material world. These beliefs served as a cornerstone for Tingley's later activities, including her interest in yoga as a scientific approach to understanding the universe and her later social goals with the UBTS. Furthermore, as women's studies and religion scholar Anne Braude explains, efforts to improve society particularly appealed to men and women who wished "to depart from the traditional social order and especially existing gender roles."[15] Blavatsky and her Theosophy co-founder Henry Steel Olcott borrowed heavily from Spiritualism when establishing the tenets of the movement, encouraging experimentation and direct experience as keys toward spiritual development.[16] Blavatsky wanted to experience direct communication with the divine, so she and Olcott investigated Spiritualism and its attendant phenomena together. Blavatsky, with Olcott by her side, lead séances, engaged in table-rapping, and philosophized about the unknown mysteries of the world. Olcott, an established lawyer, managed their finances, gathered participants, and dealt with the minutia of conducting spiritual inquiries. Through this partnership, Olcott provided Blavatsky with financial and organizational support that allowed her to focus on finding new ways to commune with spirits and establish herself as a known medium. Spiritualism, like Theosophy, encouraged its adherents to investigate spirituality, rather than ascribe to doctrines in blind faith. As scientific advancements continued in the nineteenth century, religions and their adherents struggled to reconcile new scientific discoveries with their dogmatic

[15] Anne Braude, Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America, (Boston, MA Beacon Press, 1989), 3.
[16] The Theosophical Society evolved from Blavatsky chance meeting of Henry Steel Olcott at Eddy Farm in Chittenden, Vermont, home to the mediums William and Horatio Eddy.

principles. Even though many people derided Spiritualists and Theosophists as hucksters and frauds, the people who looked to these movements for spiritual understanding hoped to incorporate scientific approaches into their religion in order to salvage their beliefs rather than discard them. Practitioners' desires to connect with spirits did not signal an aspiration to return to an ancient order, but a wish to use spiritual knowledge to achieve higher levels of understanding, ushering in an era "characterized by the accomplishment of a broad program of progressive social reform and a complete reformation of personal life."[17] Less hierarchical and more individualistic than traditional religious organizations, the progressive elements of these movements allowed women to achieve higher levels of leadership in these groups.

The most memorable leaders of the Theosophical movement were Blavatsky, Annie Besant, and Tingley. Unlike concurrent Christian denominations, Theosophy did not systematically exclude women from leadership positions. Theosophy constructed an alternate view of gender from dominant Western religions in its organizational creation and its cosmology, making strong female leadership the norm rather than the exception during its most active period. Additionally, Blavatsky's philosophical explanations of the universe centered on the messages from the Mahatmas, a kind of spiritual guide, and a vague definition of the Over-Soul that did not rely on gendered actors. This direct communion with spirits, or even a mediated communication facilitated by Blavatsky, created a path to spirituality not reliant on male interpretations of God. Furthermore,

[17] Braude, Radical Spirits, 6.

Blavatsky's interpretation did not automatically ascribe the highest divinity as male, thereby allowing women's religious imagination to embrace the possibility of a female deity.

"A Sort of Holy Land"

Their interest in Spiritualism eventually led Blavatsky and Olcott to explore other aspects of the occult, bringing them away from the "local" experience of communing with the dead in a specific place in favor of a search around the world and throughout history for the "Truth." This departure from Spiritualism drew Blavatsky and Olcott East, a turn that would shape Americans views about Eastern religion for decades to come. In 1875, along with William Quan Judge, whose interest in the occult had led him directly to Olcott and Blavatsky in 1874, they attended a lecture on "The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians," in New York City. So inspired by the meeting, the three decided to form the Theosophical Society, dedicated to the "knowledge of divine things" or, literally, "god-wisdom." The society did not gain much attention or momentum until after Blavatsky published a two-volume book explaining Theosophical principles, *Isis Unveiled* (1877*)*. The book argued that in the ancient past there existed a universal religion from which all other religions stemmed. She believed that Eastern religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, contained the most elements of the original "Wisdom's Religions." The pro-Eastern religion stance prompted one commentator to suggest that Blavatsky should have named her work, *The Horrors of Christianity*

Unveiled and the Excellencies of Hinduism Praised.[18] *Isis Unveiled* showed that Blavatsky only had scant knowledge of Eastern religions; most of her work derived from a more general interest in Spiritualism that defined the very earliest stages of the Theosophical Society.

The systemization of Theosophy in *Isis Unveiled* began a shift toward a broader interest in Eastern religions, and in 1877, Olcott and Blavatsky traveled to India to, in their words, "take up residence in, what to all students of Oriental philosophy and occult science, is a sort of 'Holy Land'."[19] Since 1813, with the passage of Britain's Charter Act that allowed American missionaries into India, these missionaries had made India a primary field of work.[20] Olcott and Blavatsky's journey was unusual as they were going to India as students of Asian religions, not as proselytizers of Christianity. Asia interested the founders of Theosophy not only as an object of study, but as a place that could provide them with answers to life's great mysteries.

Blavatsky and Olcott's visit to India occurred at a historical moment when the United States emerged as a more important global player in terms of its both presence abroad and increased immigration to the U.S. The U.S.'s tenuous role as a global power resulted in an uneasy attitude towards the rest of the world; both fearful and curious, Americans in the last quarter of the nineteenth century looked to various cultural sources to make sense in changing demographics and geopolitical relationships. Xenophobia,

[18] Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, 160.
[19] Ibid.,161.
[20] Milton Singer, "Passage to More than India" in *When a Great Tradition Moderninzes*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 11-38.

fetishization, universality, and imperialism informed how Americans coped with changing demographics and the expanding geographic reach of the United States. The Theosophical Society's development fetishized Asian religions while seeking a peaceable universalist interpretation of spirituality. They also inserted their own belief system in Asia and at the same time fought British colonial rule. For critics, the Theosophists created an uncomfortable non-Western identity that was just Western enough to cause many to approach Theosophical beliefs with a xenophobic attitude.

Theosophy's embrace of Asian religions seemed incompatible and combative to Protestantism, thereby positioning Theosophists on the fringe of acceptable Americanness. Fears about destruction of American values and identity heightened as immigrants from Asia and Catholics from Europe came over in three main waves between 1820 and 1910, with a surge in Asian immigration after the 1848 discovery of gold in California. By 1870, the U.S. government explicitly denied Chinese individuals the ability to become citizens, and by 1882, Chinese workers could no longer enter the U.S. Despite anti-Chinese sentiment that bled over to opinions of all Asians, almost 200,000 Asian immigrants from outside of China entered the U.S. between 1885 and 1917; around 5,000 immigrants came from India.[21] President Theodore Roosevelt succinctly articulated the anxieties about "foreigners" by stating, only a few months after William McKinley was assassinated in 1901, that the U.S. need to closely monitor

[21] Also as Lee notes, 1917 marks the U.S. congress's creation of the "'Asiatic Barred Zone,' which prohibited the immigration of any person whose ancestry could be traced to the Asian continent or Pacific Islands" Robert Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture,* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999).

immigrants entering the country was a way to measure in each immigrant "some intelligent capacity to appreciate American institutions and act sanely as American citizens."[22] The late nineteenth century found increasingly stringent immigration laws enacted against people from Asian countries, particularly the Chinese workers who had come over in large numbers in the mid-nineteenth century. These laws, accompanied by political and popular representations of East Asians as a menacing, unassimilable, and effeminate horde, created a pernicious racism against Asians. As scholar Robert Lee explains in *Orientals*, "By the turn of the century, Asian immigrants were represented as the yellow peril, a threat to nation, race, and family. The [U.S.] acquisition of territories and colonies brought with it a renewed threat of 'Asiatic' immigration, an invasion of 'yellow men' and 'little brown brothers.'"[23] Theosophists' adoption of "Oriental" practices cast themselves in an uneasy position. While most American Theosophists were born and raised in the U.S., by choosing to adopt, what was viewed as, "Oriental" practice placed them in a culturally separate sphere. In many ways as American citizens adopting a foreign, potentially dangerous practice they were more threatening than foreigners practicing their own indigenous beliefs in America.

While East Asia and East Asians received the majority of negative attention in the U.S., Americans did not display the same openly antagonistic attitudes about India, still one of the crown jewels in the British Empire. India's position as a colonial portion of

[22] Theodore Roosevelt, United States Department of State / *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 3, 1901*, accessed January 24, 2013 http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1901&entity=FRUS.FRUS1901.p0021&isize=text.
[23] Lee, Orientals, 10.

the British Empire made it more an object of curiosity and inquiry, rather than a potential threat. Instead of viewing India as a peer in terms of its colonial subjugation to the British, America by the nineteenth century had become a key ally to Britain and was inclined to view Indians under the terms established by the British, rather than support Indian nationalism. Through the lens of British imperialism, Americans understood India in terms of "Orientalism." Nineteenth century Americans knew of India only through Orientalist thinkers, who "[made] the Orient speak, describe[d] the Orient, render[ed] its mysteries plain for and to the West," consequently rendering the Orientalist and his Occidental audience existentially and morally outside of the Orient.[24] This knowledge constituted an uneven and uneasy political relationship between colonized and colonizer that shaped the "distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts."[25] In addition to these types of knowledge I would add religion as well. Not only the Theosophical society, but missionaries and later Christian religious leaders in the U.S. wanted to know more about Asian religions, and their information came largely through an Orientalist lens.

A burgeoning religious reformation in India mitigated many of the Theosophical Society's views of Asia that today one might misconstrue as Orientalist. Blavatsky and Olcott arrived in India at a fortuitous time in terms of how Indians would receive Theosophy. Beginning in 1875, Swami Dayananda Saraswati started a Hindu reform

[24] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 20-21. While Said's explanation of Orientalism has been appropriately critiqued in terms of understanding American relationship with Asia in the late nineteenth century, Said's definition of Orientalism remains the most accurate interpretation of that particular historical period.
[25] Ibid., 12.

movement, the Arya Samaj, hoping to return Hinduism to a purer version focused on the core text of the *Vedas*. Indians embraced Saraswati's efforts as a means of combating the organizational structure imposed by Orientalists who worked within the British Raj. Not simply a fundamentalist movement, the Arya Samaj's call for religious purity challenged Western definitions of their religious beliefs. Thus Blavatsky's own call for a return to a purer, universal religion offered Western support to the Arya Samaj mission.[26]

Arriving in India at the right moment allowed Blavatsky and Olcott to amass a following sufficient to launch permanent societies in India and Sri Lanka, establishing Theosophy as a truly global movement and revealing the increasing interplay of Western and Eastern beliefs. In Theosophy, Westerners did more than appropriate Eastern ideas; they worked within indigenous movements to achieve anti-colonial goals. Blavatsky and Olcott founded a headquarters in Adyar, India, not far from Madras, and launched a journal, *The Theosophist,* in 1879. These permanent societies lent credence to the Theosophists' mission and theological interpretations. In addition to working within Hindu revivalism, Olcott crusaded for the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, joining forces with *Maha-Bodhi*. By 1884 both Olcott and Blavatsky announced an affiliation with Buddhism, after which Olcott focused more on Buddhist education than Theosophy.[27] The growing affiliation with Buddhism did not mean Blavatsky abandoned Theosophy's distinctive belief system. As Olcott focused his energies on

[26] Though they worked together well for a number of years, the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj, did eventually part ways.
[27] Olcott helped found of three colleges and more than two hundred schools dedicated to Buddhist beliefs by 1900.

Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Blavatsky worked to complete her second book, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). This volume reveals that Blavatsky had learned a great deal more about Buddhism and Hinduism by this point and included ideas about reincarnation, the over-soul, and *Brahman* in the text. The "secret doctrine" was that fundamental essence of all religions that could never be fully understood by a human. To this end, Blavatsky retained her beliefs in Spiritualism, claiming to get her messages from Masters, or Mahatmas, who wrote her direct messages and revealed the true secrets of the universe to her.

The growing success of the Theosophists and Blavatsky's increasing reliance on Mahatmas for secret messages attracted interest, and people scrambled to verify her claims. The London Society for Psychical Research, which sought to prove the veracity of psychic phenomenon, sent an investigator to determine whether or not Blavatsky had written the letters from the Mahatmas and if she had concealed compartments in her home. The report condemned Blavatsky, stating that she "should be viewed 'neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress", but as "one of the most accomplished, and interesting impostors in history."[28] The reports discredited Blavatsky in a cloud of scandal that led the Arya Samaj to reject its previous affiliation with the Theosophists; after this, she left for London, where she remained until she died in 1891. Blavatsky's departure from the Theosophists did not signal the end of Theosophy. Olcott continued to work in India where Annie Besant joined him in 1893.

[28] Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought,* 168.

Besant took the helm of the organization, but upon arrival in India began practicing Hinduism and agitating for an independent India. In 1917 she became the president of the Indian National Congress.[29]

Universal Religious Understanding: Theosophy and The Parliament of the World's Religions

While Blavatsky, Olcott, and Besant expanded Theosophy, Buddhism, and Hinduism throughout South Asia, William Q. Judge tried to strengthen and expand Theosophy in the U.S. Judge created a printing press and began *The Path*, a magazine concerned with Theosophy, in 1886, and began reprinting the main texts of Theosophy. By 1888 Judge had established twenty-five branches of the Theosophical Society; at his death in 1896 he had more than quadrupled that number. Like Blavatsky and Olcott, Judge also began to emphasize Oriental religions but without any overt connections to either Hinduism or Buddhism that existed in Asia. Instead, he shared a vision of universalist religious attitudes proposed by prominent religious thinkers in the U.S. Judge wanted the Theosophical Society to focus on the formation of a universal brotherhood that did not discriminate, encouraged studies of religion, philosophy, and science, and explored "unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man."[30] The newness and highly malleable nature of the Theosophists' cosmology, even as some members tied themselves to more deeply rooted religious traditions in Asia, gave leaders

[29] Other books that discuss Besant's life in more detail include: Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); . Jeffery Paine, *Father India: How Encounters with an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1998); and Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[30] Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, 169.

like Judge the ability to interpret the core text as suited to his needs. This kind of reinterpretation of Eastern religions, beginning with Blavatsky and evolving further in the U.S., created a precedent of Westerners viewing the less hierarchical and tightly controlled religions and spiritual practices such as yoga as sources from which people could poach the concepts that complemented their individual needs.

The Theosophist approach to Asian religions suggests a broader desire in the U.S. to create a universal religious belief that would unite, rather than divide, people; this universalist attitude presaged later popular notions following World War II about yoga as a universal practice that a person could pick and choose from at will. The Theosophists created a global organization whose core identity rested in Buddhist and Hindu beliefs in South Asia. In an attempt to find a singular Truth, Blavatsky turned to an olio of the oldest religions to construct a cosmology based on the "Masters of Ancient Wisdom", or Mahatmas, who oversaw the cosmic evolution towards perfect enlightenment. The admiration and incorporation of ancient beliefs from non-Christian denominations functioned in a similar vein to the objectives of the Parliament of the World's Religions held at The Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in September 1893. The gathering of speakers from a large span of religions, including speakers representing Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, Christian Science, Baha'i Faith, Spiritualism, Theosophy (Besant and Judge spoke on behalf of Theosophists), and more familiar Judeo-Christian sects, was the first

organized dialogue between the great arrays of world religions.[31] Judging by the large audiences it attracted, the Parliament's goal of creating greater understanding among various religious groups was achieved at least in part. However, in some ways it was an intellectually and morally elevated version of the Midway Plaisance at the fair. Where the Midway offered a commercial space of amusements representing various cultures for fairgoers to ogle, the more exotic speakers at the Parliament drew the largest audiences. Swami Vivekananda, a late addition to the program, served as the spokesman for Hinduism, attracting seven thousand effusive audience members and granting him the celebrity to carry on a speaking tour of the U.S. where his attractiveness and exotic dress made sure the "Cyclonic Swami" continued to attract audiences.[32] In the cases of the Eastern religions, audience members' desire to understand foreign religions intertwined with a desire to voyeuristically see "exotic" "Oriental" holy men.

Despite its tendency towards exoticism, the Parliament departed from previous organized Christian connections with Indian religions interested in conversion in favor of a more romantic view of Asia espoused in the U.S. by the Transcendentalists and later adopted by Tingley, as well as many practitioners of yoga in America. Christian

[31]Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and "The Assembling of the Parliament - Words of Welcome and Fellowship," *World's Parliament of Religions, 1893*, accessed May 24, 2012, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/11489.html.

[32] Sukalyan Sengupta and Makarand Paranjape, eds., *The Cyclonic Swami: Vivekanada in the West* (New Delhi: Samvad India Foundation, in association with Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, 2005). As stated before Swami Vivekanada is often considered the founder of yoga in the United States, his Vendanta society's established after his departure from the U.S. served as small nodes for people seeking yoga instruction. However in terms of how Americans came to understand yoga, the sensationalized relationship that the Theosophists had with yoga in San Diego contributed to a national dialogue about yoga more so than the Vedanta societies.

missionaries filled their writings with depictions of Indians as irresponsible, filthy, naked, delusional, and dangerously beyond the point of redemption, but, despite childlike characteristics, also capable of fostering an anarchic uprising against British colonial rule.[33] Rejecting this view, the Parliament's organizers and audiences leaned more towards a romantic view established in the U.S. through the writings of Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Transcendentalists romanticized and reinterpreted spiritual texts in their work on life in America, and scholars regard Emerson as "the first important American to incorporate strains of Oriental thought and to seek a reconciliation between Eastern and Western ideals."[34] Rather than viewing Transcendentalists' use of Eastern texts as a way to merely support his preexisting beliefs, it is more useful to view the incorporation of these texts as one avenue towards diminishing prejudicial views of non-Christian religions. Furthermore, as Catherine Albanese has argued, "if Thoreau celebrated Asia, in the end he pruned it for planting in the domestic soil of Concord, Massachusetts, grafting it to Puritan-Calvinist roots."[35] They mixed traditions and applied them to life in New England in order to server their larger points about rising above materialism and fully experiencing nature and life. Theosophists also adopted this magpie approach to religious beliefs. The organizers of the Parliament of the Word's Religions attempted to depart

[33] Kirin Narayan, "Refractions of the Field at Home" American Representations of Hindu Holy Men in the 19th and 20th Centuries" *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 4 (1993): 483-486.
[34] Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought,* 46.
[35] Catherine L. Albanese, *The Spirituality of the American Transcendentalists: Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Amos Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, and Henry David Thoreau*, (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1988), 349.

from both traditions and present religious leaders as objectively as possible; in their program they effusively describe the dress and appearance of their "Oriental" delegates, while merely naming the American and European speakers. Even as they strove towards objectivity and respect, the organizers could not avoid the trappings of exoticizing the "other" at the Parliament.[36] In this respect, even Tingley and other later adopters of yoga who follow the tradition of the Transcendentalists and the Universalists could not, despite their best intentions, avoid the unequal geopolitical relationships between the West and the East.

The White Man's Burden: Colonial Power and Representations of India

While the Parliament brought knowledge of Asian religions to some Americans, a large portion of America learned about India through popular culture and knowledge that set the stage for interpreting all types of culture from India, including yoga and Theosophy. Popular imaginings of India provided readers with a basic understanding of cultural difference and created a visual discourse that "derive[d] from other ideological formations that reflect[ed] and reinforce[d] power relationships across national boundaries."[37] In magazines such as *National Geographic* (1888-), non-Western nations served as object lessons in cultural and biological evolution cast through an Imperialist gaze.[38] In the case of India, *National Geographic* justified British rule on its pages, based in the belief that the spiritual detachment espoused in India necessitated and facilitated

[36] "The Assembling of the Parliament."
[37] Narayan, "Refractions of the Field at Home."
[38] Catherine Lutz and Jane Lou Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993).

European colonization. Similarly, the popular writing of Rudyard Kipling that portrayed the British as proper rulers faced with the terrible burden of colonizers: "Take up the White Man's burden--/And reap his old reward:/The blame of those ye better,/The hate of those ye guard." Kipling, in recognition of America's new role as colonizer, penned this poem and sent it to Theodore Roosevelt, then governor of New York, encouraging him to push for America to take a more active role in colonizing Asia.[39] Finally, circuses "depicted India as an immutable cultural landscape fixed in ancient 'Asiatic' mode of production."[40] To some extent the Theosophists shared this popular perception that Indians and their culture remained trapped in the past. Theosophy and the Râja Yoga School committed themselves to the idea that Asian religions held deep ancient truths. Even as the Theosophists played an important role in supporting Indian independence under Annie Besant, the cornerstone of their belief system maintained that the primary contribution of Indian culture was its spiritual history.[41] Furthermore, the anti-colonial efforts central to the Theosophists based in India were absent at the Râja Yoga School, even though the school and its attendees espoused a view of universal brotherhood and cultivated the image of India as a close neighbor.

[39] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," (February, 1899), accessed January 24, 2013, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5478/. Of course this poem was a call to America to take their place next to Britain as rulers of the world during the Spanish American War.

[40] Davis, *The Circus Age*, 217.

[41] In the particular case of Besant and Indian ancientness, the construction of an immutable past is more complicated than a Western imposition of a particular order. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 on Indra Devi, Indians in an effort to combat British colonial rule resuscitated ancient practices in India as a mode of defiance against the British.

Pernicious manifestations of power, gender, and sexuality in the colonial setting complicated the view of a static, ancient Indian culture. The Theosophists looked to an ancient, re-constructed past at the same time they hoped to usher in a new, progressive social order, all while the colonial present in India shaped their views. By incorporating Asian beliefs into the Râja Yoga School, American Theosophists participated in a colonial order. While Theosophists' knowledge of Asia filtered through an Orientalist lens that led to an anti-colonial sentiment, people outside of Theosophy attached Orientalist perceptions of gender and sexuality to its adherents. Under the guise of anthropological education, the imagery of Asian women that circulated through the United States at the time put the female body on display and depicted situations that rendered the subject of these photos as silent, exotic, and potentially sexual beings. White, American women interested in the "Orient," became "consumers, producers, practitioners, critics and experts" of Asia; through these roles, women shaped the discourse surrounding Asia, giving them the opportunity to challenge conventional Western gender roles, but also re-inscribing those roles onto Asian bodies. American women asserted their power to adopt and reshape Asian culture to suit their own needs, but at the same time subjected foreign practices to the same negative popular imagery of Asia that cast white, Western women in a submissive, hyper-sexualized light.[42]

Contemporary observers at the end of the nineteenth century would not have articulated the complicated relationship of power, gender, and sexuality that came with

[42] Mari Yoshihara, Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism Introduction, 7-8.

the adoption of Asian practices. Instead, the attraction to the Orient was cast as part of a desire to create a cosmopolitan and catholic identity in a rapidly changing society. Some scholars would point to a general interest in the "Orient" as an antidote to the pressing issues of modernity and an enticement to join groups like the Theosophists, which adapted Hindu thought, to a more generalized spirituality. However, as Thomas Kim has convincingly articulated , "Orientalism expresses a desire for authenticity, for intense spiritual experience or even primitive emotion, in reaction to 'overcivilized' modern existence."[43] Orientalism, as deployed in work influenced by T.J. Jackson Lears's *No Place of Grace*, reduces objects and practices imported from Asia as merely signifiers of the "other." Kim's study of Asian decorative objects in the home instead shows that "Oriental objects did not arouse a fascination with the primitive, nor did they serve merely as artifacts of premodern civilization; what Oriental objects supposedly offered the modern consumer was an education in beauty, an appreciation of 'nature,' and a training of the aesthetic sense."[44] Thus Oriental objects served not merely as accessories meant to cure the viewer of the ills of modern society, but functioned as active producers of a modern Western society in terms of uplift through refinement of tastes and expansion of education.

All of these broader cultural trends related to American's interest in the East, even if they did not directly address yoga, established the discourse into which yoga and yoga

[43] Thomas W. Kim,"Being Modern: The Circulation of Oriental Objects,"*American Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2006): 385. Kim specifically attacks Lears, but that argument has been adopted by many other scholars.
[44] Ibid., 387.

practitioners would find themselves. Even as Western yogis such as Tingley interpreted yoga to promote her own Western vision of a better world, she needed to contend with general opinions regarding women, Asia, and colonialism that filled in most Americans' incomplete understanding of yoga.

"No Other Aim Than to Render Help to Humanity:" Katherine Tingley and the Founding of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society

Following Blavatsky's death, the nature of Theosophy began to change, moving towards more practical and social engagement with the world at large; however, Blavatsky's vision still shaped outsiders' perceptions of the society as a spiritual folly, and she was caricatured as spook and a fraud by even the literati. James Joyce referred to Blavatsky as the author of a "yogibogeybox;" in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* she was satirized as Madame Sosostris, "the wisest woman in Europe,/ With a wicked pack of cards."[45] The power of Blavatsky's tarnished image allowed critics and satirists to sustain depictions of Theosophy as spiritual hokum, attractive to dupes and scam artists. Despite the general negative perceptions that surrounded Theosophy, Annie Besant worked tirelessly in India as the head of the Theosophical Society and William Judge continued to spread Theosophy in the U.S. Working out of New York City, Judge published and held meetings guiding his followers in an intellectual interest in spirituality. Judge's emphasis on esoteric spirituality and obtuse intellectual examination

[45] Quoted in Jeffery Paine, *Father India: How Encounters with an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), 63.

of the spirit shifted towards a more grounded, proactive system of living when he met Katherine Tingley (1847 - 1929) in 1894. Born Katherine Westcott in Newburyport, Massachusetts, Tingley met Judge while she was distributing food to the families of striking workers on the east side of Manhattan. This meeting moved Tingley away from secular charity work toward Theosophy, which in turn altered the course of the American Theosophical Society, pushing it away from intellectualism towards the creation of a training ground for living that she hoped would change society.

In the two years Tingley spent with Judge, she became his confidant and played an instrumental role in his decision to separate and distinguish the American branch of the Theosophical Society from Besant's Indian-based branch, a move signaling the direction Tingly would eventually take the Theosophical Society. Tingley's active role in charity work reflected the re-emergence of women in a variety of organizations during this period, collectively labeled the Progressive Era. Similar to Tingley, the types of women attracted to Theosophy tended to participate in Progressive Era activities and sought alternative venues to assert their voices. A number of scholars determined that five main factors described women attracted to Theosophy. In general, these women were unhappily married, middle- or upper-class, with backgrounds in Judeo-Christianity; they were also interested in intellectual pursuits and often had a friendship with a Theosophist.[46] Having a friend within the Theosophical organization expanded membership because first-hand knowledge of Theosophical lodges led to a less

[46] Evelyn Kirkley, "Equality of the Sexes, But...": Women in Point Loma Theosophy, 1899-1942" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 1, no. 2 (1998): 272-288.

sensational view than most outsiders had about the organizations. The Theosophists viewed themselves not as simply believers, but as crusaders capable of altering the entire trajectory of the world through their abilities to tap into ancient knowledge. This mission, which Tingley led, persuaded women that joining the Theosophists would allow them to have an active role in both spiritual and social issues; opportunities that they might not otherwise have.

Before Tingley enacted her vision for a new, U.S.-based, Theosophical Society , she had to legitimate herself as the heir apparent to the Theosophical movement. Judge died in 1896, after which Tingley embarked on a worldwide tour, which she called "the Crusade," which brought her to Darjeeling, India to meet Blavatsky's Mahatma, an ancient soul that existed on an astral plane.[47] Though Judge named her his predecessor, Tingley struggled until 1898 for recognition as the official head of the Theosophical Society in America. In 1898, after a vote of confidence in her leadership, one of the first acts the newly victorious Tingley undertook was to rename the organization the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society (UBTS). The renaming signaled a definitive break from Annie Besant's Theosophical group, which one member of the UBTS declared a "small Theosophical society, which all true members of the Universal Brotherhood have always ignored."[48]

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[47]Going to a physical space to meet an astral being is an example of the odd theatrics the Theosophists would sometimes engage in order to authenticate themselves.

[48] E.A. Neresheimer, "The Detention of the Cuban Children," *The Century Path* 6 (1), November 1902, accessed January 25, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=3DpDAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA12-IA15&dq=%22Theosophical+society,+which+all+true+members+of+the+Universal+Brotherhood+have+always+ignored%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=HNICUdO4Nsmb2QWguIBo&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&

Beyond renaming the Theosophical Society, Tingley shifted the emphasis of Theosophical work from intellectual pursuits to proselytizing and good works. In her view, Theosophy had become cramped by the "intellectualism of the age, an intellectualism which gave to Theosophy the appearance of a metaphysical inaccessibility to which, in its true nature, is altogether foreign."[49] Tingley envisioned this new emphasis in Theosophical purpose as a gathering of a group of people, the most dedicated of whom would live at Point Loma and "who were willing to prove by their actions that they had no other aim than to render help to humanity by lives of unselfish devotion."[50] In this vein, Tingley sought a truly universal Theosophical system, which crossed racial, class, and national boundaries. Prior to the founding of the headquarters at Point Loma, Tingley also promoted activities focused on aid relief to the poor, and the education of children. As part of her initial work with the Theosophists in New York City, Tingley "supervised games for working-class children that taught middle-class values of respect, orderliness, and self-control. They also briefly operated a home for working girls that provided evening instruction in literature and domestic arts and a domestic atmosphere that encouraged cooperation and mutual support." [51] Successes in New York led Tingley to centralize her control over the UTBS and to move the organization headquarters to southern California, where she could create a fully realized and contained educational facility at Point Loma.

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q=%22Theosophical%20society%2C%20which%20all%20true%20members%20of%20the%20Universal%20Brotherhood%20have%20always%20ignored%22&f=false

[49] Tingley, *The Life at Point Loma*, 6.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ashcraft, *Dawn of a New Cycle*, 39.

The White City: The Founding of Point Loma

When Tingley moved the UBTS to Point Loma, California, she also established the Râja Yoga School as a training ground for future leaders with Theosophical beliefs. Point Loma attracted wealthy and powerful adherents, who brought the school to national attention, making it one of the most well-known places where a systemized, Westernized interpretation of yoga existed in America. Tingley desired, but was also cautious of, the national attention Point Loma received, and made a point to craft the origin story of Point Loma in terms of a religious freedom and nationalism in an effort to combat the negative imagery often attached to Asian religions in the U.S. The deconstruction of bourgeoisie family structures at Point Loma living situations would have merely been a curiosity if the Râja Yoga School didn't also suggest teaching children alternative ways to live in the hopes of influencing the future of American society. Despite Tingley and her followers' best attempts to control their organizations image, negative opinions about Eastern spirituality meant that the Râja Yoga School became a place where the public learned that yoga was foreign, dangerous, disruptive, and deleterious to the fabric of American family life.

On February 23, 1897 the Theosophists held a spiritual and surprisingly patriotic cornerstone-laying ceremony for their new headquarters at Point Loma, California. According to Theosophical beliefs, as a child Tingley divined the creation of a White City, "where [she] should gather together children of all nations and teach them how to

live rightly."[52] California fit the esoteric needs of the Theosophical movement because in their cosmology, California had once belonged to the ancient landmass Lemuria. The Theosophical history of California made it a highly psychic space where the former Lemuria residents had sown their magical powers into the very soil and rocks of the Pacific coast.[53] On a less astral plane, California offered one of the closest points to India in the United States; basing the UBTS headquarters there, despite the split from Besant, remained a metaphorically important decision. In addition to relative proximity to Theosophy's Eastern roots, Tingley recognized that California's natural advantages included "its climate, its commercial possibilities, its picturesque beauty, and its healthfulness."[54] Having found a suitable location for the school, Tingley spoke of her hopes for the Râja Yoga School: "Through this School and its branches the children of the race will be taught the laws of physical life and the laws of physical, moral, and mental health...The future of this school will be closely associated with the future of the great American republic. While the School will be international in character it will be American in centre."[55] In her inaugural speech, Tingley's patriotism reflected America's new position as an exceptional leader in an increasingly interconnected world. Like the United States itself, Tingley promised that any role in a global community, be it through service work or spiritual exploration, would remain tied to core values of the United

[52] Quoting Tingley, Ibid., 51.
[53] Blavatsky's explanation of Lemuria is available in *The Secret Doctrine* (1895). For a scholarly approach to the mythology of Lemuria see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[54] Tingley, *The Life at Point Loma*, 3.
[55] "Corner Stone Laid. Mystic Ceremonial by Theosophists on Point Loma," *San Diego Union*, February 24, 1897, 2: *Pacific Thesopohists* 6 (March 1897): 50.

States. Tingley's alignment of the UBTS with America conveyed to her audience that the organization was not a threat and that the UBTS, like the U.S., had the potential to claim the mantel of global leadership. As she told the group gathered at the ceremony, "while your first duty lies with your families, your cities, your country, there is another duty you owe to the world as a whole." [56] In other places she wrote that she considered it a best practice to teach children that they are "to regard themselves as integral and responsible parts of the nation." [57] Emphasizing the importance of national identity and responsibility to the nation, Tingley tried to mitigate any negative, foreign connotations with Theosophy and yoga. However, more than just a rhetorical strategy to protect the UBTS, Tingley hoped that her followers would lead Americans into a new era of enlightenment focused more on good works than materialism.

In its initial years, Point Loma, although international in thought, housed mainly Americans and focused its efforts on domestic issues. According to Tingley, the students came "from all social ranks and from all nationalities"; however, initially American women constituted the majority of the students.[58] Tingley moved to Point Loma in 1900; according to the U.S. Census, 95 people were living on the property, most of them in tents while the permanent structures were constructed. Tingley, along with a few of her close aides, lived in the "Homestead," a pre-existing building, which formerly functioned as a sanitarium. Twenty men and thirty-five women lived at Point Loma along with thirty-seven children. A decade later the census found 357 people at Point Loma; around

[56] Tingley, *The Life at Point Loma*, preface.
[57] Ibid., 11.
[58] Ibid., 5.

239 of the residents were adults and 118 were children. Females narrowly outnumbered men, with 199 females and 158 males at the compound according to the 1910 census. Heartened by the slowly expanding colony, Tingley continued her lofty pronouncements outlining the School's future in relation to an overall national progress improved by the UBTS's teachings. Idealistically, Tingley hoped her curriculum would "waken and vivify that individual responsibility of man to man [in her students], which alone can arouse the best activities of the nation, and set it upon the path of progress which shall result in the regaining of the lost art of Living." Through the actions learned at Point Loma, Tingley's followers would be able to help not only themselves, but to also become "dispenser[s] of good" that would reclaim industrial commerce from the avaricious hands of the world's business leaders.[59] Tingly tapped into key ideas of American identity popular at the time: individualism, progress, and capitalism. Tingley and her followers believed that the cornerstones of the nation were not inherently wrong, but needed alteration. Individualism under UBTS still meant personal responsibility, but all sense of the individual was focused on service to others. Similarly, Tingley did not measure progress by accumulation or Darwinian-influenced ideas about survival, but the "art of Living." Finally she viewed commerce, in and of itself a neutral idea to Theosophists, as under the control of the wrong people, those who did not care for the greater good. Tingley wanted her school to create better American citizens, through a system of ancient wisdom imported from India and reconfigured through a Theosophical lens.

[59] Ibid.

Lotus Buds at the Râja Yoga School

A central part of the societal transformation Tingley hoped to achieve at Point Loma rested on the creation of the Râja Yoga School. Despite its name, Tingley created the Râja Yoga School not on the writings of Pantajali's *Yoga Sutra*, but on her views of character, gender, and family within a Theosophical cosmology. Furthermore, Tingley's interpretation of yoga, while connected to Theosophy, served to shift the UBTS away from Theosophy's earlier intellectualism and spiritualism toward a more holistic emphasis on developing active citizens working to improve the world. Tingley's charity work in Manhattan led her to believe that the best way to ensure a person would end up on the "right" path in life required a separation from the temptations of contemporary society. In one of her public addresses reprinted in *Theosophical Path* she explained the struggles she encountered working with impoverished children:

> ...In spite of all my efforts to help them, to teach them how to begin anew, feeding them, clothing them, finding them positions (and then after a week or two having them back at our mission to feed and clothe again) lo! to my dismay, I found that I was actually encouraging in pauperism those whom I would most serve... So when the opportunity presented itself for me to found a school of prevention, I grew younger. New energy came to me; new enthusiasm was mine.[60]

Tingley's charity suggested to her that only early, fully-immersive education could prevent children from growing into indolent adults. She enthusiastically opened the Râja Yoga School in 1900 with only five students, but by 1910 enrollment had reached 300. Beginning at the age of three and continuing until the age of eighteen, students found

[60] Quoted in Emmet Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community in California, 1897-1942: A Theosophical Experiment,* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1955), 77.

themselves immersed in boarding school life defined by Tingley's interpretation of Râja Yoga.

Tingley only provided the residents of Point Loma with a loose definition of Râja Yoga, which her followers attempted to articulate in greater detail later on. H.T. Edge explained to readers of the *Theosophical Path* that the difficulty of explaining Râja Yoga lay in its lack of formal methodology. Edge described it as a closed off system that could only be fully understood by practicing Theosophists trained directly under Katherine Tingley, who remained "under the supervision of the Theosophical Leader."[61] Furthermore, Edge contended that because it did not rely on a system and focused instead on the "character of the teacher", Theosophy remained more pure and pedagogically sound than written instruction that one could misinterpret. In this way, yoga instruction acted as a means to centralize control with Tingley and reinforce hierarchies of power within her organization. Only those who Tingley deemed good enough, which often hinged not only on levels of dedication and service to the UTBS but also monetary contributions, could gain access to Tingley's higher level of spiritual awareness via yoga.

According to Edge, part of the success at the Râja Yoga School came from the fact that the teachers were students of Theosophy, allowing teachers and students to work

[61] H.T. Edge, "Râja Yoga Teaching in Schoolroom," *The Theosophical Path,* 5(1), July 1913, accessed January 25, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=EYNIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA55&dq=%22under+the+supervision+of+the+Theosophical+Leader.%E2%80%9D&hl=en&sa=X&ei=V9QCUZLtONDs2AXp34HYBA&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22under%20the%20supervision%20of%20the%20Theosophical%20Leader.%E2%80%9D&f=false, 55.

together towards the same cause: "to enable the higher nature to control the lower."[62] Edge's emphasis on the process of "self-mastery" as a means to enlightenment refocused the purpose of education itself. Rather than seeing education as means to an end, such as employment, Edge asked: "why not regard the education as an end in itself - an end fulfilled?" With this perspective on education, "even if the pupil is a girl, who will afterwards lead a domestic life and never open schoolbooks again, nevertheless that Soul has fulfilled one of the purposes of existence."[63] Separating education from vocation served in part as a justification for the education for girls and young women at the Râja Yoga Academy. Additionally, if developing a self-possessed, fully-realized soul served as education's main purpose, then general education need not be segregated by sex.

While Tingley never offered a prescriptive definition of yoga, the Theosophical understanding of human development challenged domestic and gender norms of the time. The cosmology of the Theosophical Society created a genderless over-soul and did not have a gendered hierarchy within their organization, which carried over into the yoga education students at Point Loma received. The Theosophists believed that "the essential fact to be kept in mind by all is that human beings are SOULS."[64] By privileging the soul over the body, which was largely influenced by the Theosophists belief in reincarnation, the UBTS could circumvent gender constraints and focus on the whole person.

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[62] Ibid., 58.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Winifred Davidson, "The Need of Perfect Co-operation among Teachers, Parents, and Children," *The Theosophical Path,* 5 (1) (July 1913), accessed January 25, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=EYNIAAAAYAAJ&dq=%22essential%20fact%20to%20be%20kept%20in%20mind%20by%20all%20is%20that%20human%20beings%20are%20SOULS%22&pg=PA60#v=onepage&q&f=false, 59.

Furthermore, Tingley believed "souls are souls, and equal in the sight of deity and discriminative man. It is only in our weakness that our inequalities come out."[65] Thus, the educators at the Râja Yoga School hoped that training their students to fully understand the whole soul of a person would lead their pupils to more inclusive attitudes and perpetrate fewer discriminatory actions. The gender-neutral utopia dreamt of by the UBTS challenged the gender hierarchy that existed in the U.S. at the time. That, coupled with Tingley's public leadership of the UBTS, fueled many of the criticisms the California media would later level against her.

In addition to challenging gender roles, Tingley's interest in the soul and the development of the whole person countered the general trend in public education, which at the time emphasized a uniform and bureaucratic system analogous to the modernization and efficiency sought after in factories—an education system that "transformed children into modern workers."[66] In contrast to Tingley's loftier goals, proponents of public education created a system meant to save children from corruption and discipline them for the workforce. Tingley disdained corruption and desired discipline, but the kinds of discipline and capitalistic goals espoused in public education settings did not jibe with Tingley's core beliefs. Tingley did not view children simply as potential future workers, but beings who needed spiritual and intellectual enrichment to develop into the kinds of people who could improve American society and later the

[65] Ibid., 61.
[66] David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 73. In the United States at the time, the best ways to educate children were highly debated; school was not yet mandatory, and the average person only attended school for five years.

world.[67] As public education advocates sought to discipline a growing, unruly population, Tingley aligned herself with the more genteel vision of education Horace Mann espoused in the mid-nineteenth century. Also an advocate of universal schooling, Mann believed in a moral as well as intellectual education that included "obedience to authority, emotional restraint, self-sacrifice, and careful utilization of knowledge for the sake of society."[68] Whereas Protestantism informed Mann's vision of a moral, well-educated child that matched the goals of the dominant members of society, Tingley's Râja Yoga School used Mann's core values grafted to a Theosophical cosmology. Tingley's unification of yoga and Mann's pedagogy created an interesting hybridization of Mann's educational system that mainstream America endorsed, while including more progressive views of gender and more exotic spirituality. Given the atmosphere surrounding gender and the East in the U.S. discussed earlier, the hybridity of Tingley's pedagogy, despite its similarities with Mann, raised concerns about what children learned and how they were treated at Râja Yoga School.

On the surface the Râja Yoga School seemed very similar to a traditional school; however, it incorporated unusual living situations that would eventually overshadow the everyday education. In addition to focusing on character, the school leaders believed "a thorough grounding in reading, writing, arithmetic, the use of one's own language, and a general all-round facility and efficiency, constitute the essential basis."[69] In general the

[67] For more on education at the beginning of the 20th century see Tyack, *The One Best System.*
[68] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 88.
[69] Edge, "Râja Yoga Teaching in Schoolroom," 56.

students learned "classical foreign languages, literature, history, bookkeeping, penmanship, shorthand, sculpting, drawing, and painting."[70] A teacher at the school, W.A. Dunn, also explained that Tingley considered music an integral part of the students' education because it "awakens in children the noblest aspirations of life."[71] Edge paid special attention to the use of language arguing that the essentials include the ability "to read clearly, so as to be distinctly audible to a large audience; to write well and clearly; to put one's thoughts into good English; and above all to command one's attention."[72] The desire to create orators went hand-in-hand with the desire to create proselytizers of Theosophy. From an early age, the students at the Râja Yoga School performed both acting and singing on stage to enrich their souls, but also to prepare them to address and engage large audiences.

In addition to a level of comfort with a large audience, daily comportment mattered a great deal to the teachers at the Râja Yoga School. The school intended its practice of heavily monitoring students' conduct to enrich the soul, as well as combat any efforts by outsiders to find fault within the school's structure. At the yoga school Tingley insisted on "correct daily conduct" that would allow students to gain "knowledge of their higher spiritual natures." The teachers emulated correct behavior and if students did not

[70] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 94.
[71] W.A. Dunn "The Râja Yoga System of Education," *The Theosophical Path* 5 (1), July 1913, accessed January 25, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=EYNIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA54&dq=%22wakens+in+children+the+noblest+aspirations+of+life.%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Ot8CUdjRMMXZ2QWWzYCACg&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22wakens%20in%20children%20the%20noblest%20aspirations%20of%20life.%22&f=false, 54.
[72] Edge, "Râja Yoga Teaching in Schoolroom," 57.

follow as expected they would be "taught that no bad tendency can exist in the fire of a determined purpose to do right."[73] Tingley also expected the students of the Râja Yoga school to develop a strong degree of self-control: comportment which could be measured not only by more active behavior, but also in "such matters as the pupil's attitude in sitting and standing - as vital as they are apparently trivial."[74] This physical discipline worked in conjunction with the spiritual and intellectual pursuits of the school, because Tingley felt that education meant "no less than the development of the Soul," which required "the tuning of the whole nature," not just select parts.[75] Here, Tingley hoped her education system would affect every part of a person's being, which, given the history of the Theosophical society as focused on intellectual understanding of spirituality, suggested that she adopted this holistic approach from yoga.

From a holistic educational approach, the Râja Yoga School sought to create a balanced person who emphasized the development of a strong character marked by individualism. At Point Loma, Râja Yoga enabled students to attain "an equilibrium, in every respect of the nature, physical, mental and moral."[76] This equilibrium would not be found in a storehouse of facts. Instead, "true education is the power to live in harmony with our environment, the power to draw out from the recesses of our own nature all the potentialities of character."[77] Character was a key concern at the beginning of the twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt argued that "a life of slothful ease, a life of that

[73]Dunn, "The Râja Yoga System of Education," 54.
[74] Edge, "Râja Yoga Teaching in Schoolroom," 57.
[75] Tingley, *The Life at Point Loma*, 7.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 8.

peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual."[78] For Roosevelt and Tingley, weak character led to a weak nation. In strikingly similar ways, Roosevelt and Tingley called for children to be active and responsible, while also retaining a level of sensitivity to others and their environment. In the Theosophical yoga education program, "to truly love a child is to help it to develop its highest faculties, which grow by, and through, a willing service to others, to teach it to help itself and so to grow strong to help its fellows."[79] Tingley saw this attitude of help and self-reliance in opposition to more mainstream education, which, in her view, and more objectively in light of the bureaucratic factory-like practices championed in public schools, fostered "the habit of selfishness [and] the duty of competition," leaving children "in ignorance of their own nature."[80] In both Roosevelt and Tingley's estimation, the future success of society resided in individual self-reliance and strong character. However, where Roosevelt's oratory spoke of conquest, war and masculinity, Tingley encouraged a domestic, pacifist, and spiritual sense of self.

Part of developing the self hinged on students building confidence in their abilities that at Point Loma vacillated between rising above prescriptive gender roles and embracing them. The only part of the school curriculum segregated by sex was vocational education, "with boys learning horticulture and printing and girls studying

[78] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, (New York: The Century Co., 1902), accessed February 1, 2013, http://www.bartleby.com/58/1.html.

[79] Tingley, *The Life at Point Loma*, 9.
[80] Ibid. And see Tyack, *The One Best System*, 47-73.

cooking, spinning silk, and child-care."[81] According to an article in *The Theosophical Path,* the purpose of the school was to teach not just academics, but also "the simple laws that govern moral, mental, and physical health to the end that such knowledge, truly applied in study and discipline, will lead them to be conquerors of themselves, with faculties awakened, and so balanced as to be harmoniously responsive to the control of the higher moral nature."[82] W.A. Dunn explained that Râja Yoga as a system of education at Point Loma "aim[ed] to unfold *balanced* men and women who will stand erect as nature designed them, conquerors of themselves, with all faculties awake and instantly responsive to the creative Soul....[and that] *all* the faculties in human life, attuned and directed in mass harmonies of the larger song of life"[83] Dunn's language describes men and women as conquerors, even if that conquering only focused on the self—a masculine language choice that spoke to the desire for mastery, but also recognized the need for harmony in the broader world. Dunn's language choice was significant because it did not prescribe the parts men or women should play in the "song of life." Instead, the ambiguous nature of Dunn's quote suggests the difficulty an organization founded and led by women had in limiting the options of a person based on their sex.

That said, Tingley did take an active stance in redefining family life and mothers' roles within the Point Loma community. Women in the U.S in the late nineteenth century

[81] Kirkley, "Equality of the Sexes, But...," 279.
[82] Dunn, "The Râja Yoga System of Education," 51.
[83] Ibid., 53.

were still expected to raise responsible citizens, a legacy of republican motherhood.[84] In terms of the Râja Yoga School, Tingley integrated conservative aspects of republican motherhood and the cult of domesticity, which consisted of piety, purity, and domesticity, into the foundational practices of the Râja Yoga School. By reinterpreting these trends through a Theosophical lens, Tingley created an environment that tacked between conservative and progressive formation of gender roles, establishing a matriarchal organization with a genderless god that still maintained the values of early nineteenth century womanhood. The idea of motherhood played an important role in many areas of women's activism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Advocating for greater protection of children in terms of labor, working through churches to care for orphans, and using maternal concerns in some elements of temperance movements, women used their responsibility as mothers, actually or figuratively, to leverage political power in the absence of full suffrage. At the Râja Yoga School, Katherine Tingley served as a maternal figure, but also worked to breakdown traditional familial roles creating an even more abstract manifestation of motherhood as she purposefully separated children from their biological parents yet maintained the mantle of mother for herself.

[84] Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective," *American Quarterly,* 28, No. 2, (Summer, 1976):187–205; and Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic,"*The William and Mary Quarterly A Magazine of Early American History and Culture* (1987): 689-721. Similarly to the cult of true womanhood, while the epitomization of the republican mother lays in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the core ideas continued to have traction into the late nineteenth century.

In an effort to develop the "whole person," Tingley separated children from their parents, only allowing visits on Sundays for two hours, though some wealthier members could see their children more often. Tingley believed separating children from their parents was essential for children to form a "royal union" with the Absolute, a union that would have been hampered by an attachment to their parents. In Tingley's estimation, parents could not see their own children's faults and allowed them to continue to behave in less than desirable ways. Tingley's approach came under fire from former community members during a trial in 1902. The trial involved the widow Irene M. Mohn, who sued Tingley for alienating her husband, one of Tingley's most devoted followers, from her and taking close to $200,000 dollars from him.[85] Mohn deposition in the trial referenced the time she spent time at Point Loma, particularly three weeks in May 1900 when she enrolled her 7-year-old daughter in the Râja Yoga School. In Mohn's testimony she retold Tingley's opinion of parent-child relationships:

> [Tingley] told me that mother love in me was evidently very strong, but she said it was natural, but it was not good for the child, and her plan was to raise children entirely independent of that and to keep them apart from it; that the mother held them back and the children could go only as far as the mother went, in their nature; that is, the mother could not draw out the better qualities. She said if they were entirely independent she (Mrs. Tingley) could do more with them in her line of training. She told me that she was going to make them all workers for humanity, to go out and work in the world, and that she could not do that if they had any personal ties, such as parents.

She also alleged that Tingley "said I ought not to look on my child any different from any other child; I ought not to have any different feeling for her than for any other child that I

[85] Emmett Greenwalt, *The Point Loma Community in California: A Theosophical Experiment*.

met; I ought to have the same feeling and no different feeling for, and that I ought to cultivate the spirit."[86]

Despite Mohn's protest, religious scholar William Ashcraft argues that Tingley and her followers "did not discard the maternal love of the Victorian home," even as they discarded the role of the biological mother.[87] In its place the Râja Yoga School had female teachers who offered emotional support and affection. Whereas Mohn chafed at the separation from her daughter, many parents at Point Loma were happy to let their children live separately. When children did visit with their parents, parents were asked to avoid spoiling them with treats, as it would generate selfishness that contradicted the selfless attitudes that they hoped communal living would foster.

Râja Yoga formed the basis of the UBTS's educational system and, even though it was only loosely based on a yogic practice, the school became a pivotal point on which Americans, particularly Californians, formed a popular understanding of yoga. In addition to the suspect behavior of Theosophists in general, the Râja Yoga School's attempt to create a society on a hill for Americans to emulate tapped into fears of foreign influences and anxiety surrounding women's role as leaders and mothers. These anxieties came to a head surrounding the immigration of Cuban students to the school in 1902.

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[86] "Tingley had Scorn for "Mother Love,"" *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922),* December 30, 1902. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164136260?accountid=7118.
[87] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle,* 98.

Tingley's Spookery and Lotus Buds: Times Mirror Company Libel Suit and the Investigation of Cuban School Children

The Râja Yoga School was a point of interest in the California media almost from the start; in Southern California's midst was not simply a new religion, but the headquarters of an alternative, Eastern religion led by an outspoken, sometimes flamboyantly dressed woman (Tingley was often dressed in purple robes). Between October 1900 and December 1902, the *Los Angeles Times* referred to the school as a "spookery," "spooks' roost," and "spookdom," and Tingley as "boss of the spooks," "spook goddess" and "autocratic woman."[88] Even after Tingley had filed a libel suit against the Times-Mirror company, its reporters at the *Los Angeles Times* wrote increasingly hostile depictions of her organization. The media assault against the Râja Yoga School shaped public understanding of yoga as the "yogibogeybox" that could potentially destroy families by virtue of its alternative domestic order and inextricable foreignness. In the earliest years of the twentieth century, a major libel suit and an immigration investigation involving the Cuban children gripped the Râja Yoga School. Though vindicated in the end, the highly publicized trials shaped attitudes towards yoga in the United States.

Tingley brought a libel suit against the Times-Mirror company after the *Los Angeles Times* printed a series of articles that illegitimated Tingley's claims of religious authority and portrayed her as a destructive force in families' lives. The tone of the initial reports on the Râja Yoga School and the Theosophists in California was one of

[88] "Mrs. Tingley the Witness," *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922), December 19, 1902. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164102623?accountid=7118.

bemusement and curiosity, the authors exhibited a doubtfulness about the endeavor, but also remaining relatively neutral. However, in the autumn of 1901, after more residents had moved into Lomaland, reports of residents' dissatisfaction begin to capture the attention of the papers. These reports incensed Tingley and provided fodder for later accusations leveled by The Gerry Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children when she began bringing Cuban children into the country.

On the pages of the *Los Angeles Times*, Tingley's alternative views on gender and family became part of a narrative of hypnotic imprisonment: otherwise why would people abandon conventional domestic arrangements? The first article appeared on October 9, 1901, in the *Los Angeles Times* depicting the attempts of Dr. William Griswald to have his daughter returned to him from the Râja Yoga School. Griswald's ex-wife had moved to Point Loma and enrolled their daughter, Bertha, in the school. While Bertha attended the school, her mother and step-father maintained a residence at Lomaland; unfortunately, in that short time Bertha's mother died. Following her mother's death, Griswold contacted Bertha and asked her to move in with him. According to the reporter, until Griswald's arrival in California, Bertha "had answered him [in letters] with natural filial affection." Despite this written warmth, at the initial meeting of father and daughter in the courthouse Bertha recoiled at her father's touch. The dismissal left Griswald in tears and he dropped the case because "he realized the futility of obtaining the love and affection of his daughter." The *Times* insinuated that Tingley and her associates coerced the "natural" affection out of Bertha, leaving readers puzzling over the "young woman

[who] prefers Tingley and her crowd to her wealthy parent."[89] The triumph of Tingley's yoga school over a wealthy, biological parent left the reporter confused. The only feasible explanation the reporter could muster was that Bertha Griswald had been brainwashed into denying her "natural" filiality to a father she had not lived with for years and to reject a life of wealth for one of relative deprivation.

Later in the month, the *Los Angeles Times* followed up on Tingley's speaking engagements and another father who had lost his children to Tingley. In both articles, the reporters depicted Tingley as an outsider and usurper. In "Mrs. Tingley's Abuse: Her Latest Outburst," written on October 28, 1901, the reporter showed Tingley as a firebrand and conspiracy theorist. From behind the lectern, she slandered local ministers and accused them of plotting to destroy her school. She allegedly accused the local Christians minsters of adultery and claimed she had "learned more of the vileness of human nature since I came to the Coast than I ever knew before. Let fathers and mothers and teachers look to their children."[90] On the following day, the *Los Angeles Times* ran another story: "He Blames Tingley For All His Troubles: Another Sad Case the Result of Spookism." This article described the plight of Chicago publisher John J. Bohn's attempts to extricate his wife Grace and his two sons from the Râja Yoga School. Grace refused to leave Point Loma or give up her children, claiming that her husband was an unfit parent and partner. John Bohn believed his wife had "become infatuated with

[89] "Daughter Spurns Father's Caress," *Los Angeles Times* (1886-1922), October 09, 1901. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164105765?accountid=7118.
[90] "Mrs. Tingley's Abuse," *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922),* October 28, 1901. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164099556?accountid=7118.

Tingley and her mind had been unbalanced by spookism, and that Tingley is, no doubt, the source of all his personal troubles."[91] Grace Bohn's decision to stay at Point Loma led to divorce, which may have compounded her husband's personal troubles, but allowed Grace to be a part of an organization in which she could be a leader and a teacher.[92]

At the heart of these accusations against Tingley lay anxieties about disruption to the domestic order. Tingley's accusations regarding unnamed, adulterous clergymen in southern California called into question the conduct of ministers and their flock. Tingley defensively challenged Christianity by associating it with the "vileness of human nature" and asking parents and teachers to consider the effects of this type of influence on their children was to criticize the heart of the home. Further, the *Los Angeles Times* portrayal of the Bohn family's estrangement led with the subheading: "Wealthy Chicago Publisher Gives Up His Sons to a Wife Who Prefers the Point Loma Outfit of Spooks to a Comfortable Home." In this single sentence, the paper prepared the reader for a story of a husband's trials, sacrificing his sons to a wife who had been taken in by a group of "spooks." In the phrasing of the article, Mrs. Bohn seemed out of her mind and out of step with the dominant desires of the time, willingly sacrificing wealth, husband, and a "comfortable home" in favor of Katherine Tingley. Through a focus on the husband's

[91] "He Blames Tingley for all His Troubles," *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)*, October 29, 1901, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164098214?accountid=7118.
[92] Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle*, 92; and "A Marriage," *New Century Path*, 7 no. 30, accessed January 25, 2013 http://books.google.com/books?id=lDxDAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA38&lpg=PA38&dq=grace+bohn+lomaland&source=bl&ots=YiJBOtjxVE&sig=PcCVHmadeLyX3q3fzxhhB_7jc8o&hl=en&sa=X&ei=l7jUT5WcJqOy2wWU9sy1Dw&ved=0CFIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=grace%20bohn%20lomaland&f=false, 18.

loss, rather than the wife's agency, the article subjugates Tingley to the role of metaphysical seductress who had the ability to destroy families.

While Tingley's lawyers submitted these earlier articles as evidence in the libel suit, it was an article written by Lanier Bartlett, "Outrages at Point Loma: Exposed by an 'Escapee' From Tingley," in the *Los Angeles Times* that prompted the suit. In it, Bartlett interviewed a Mrs. M. Leavitt, a Theosophist, who reported on the conditions at Point Loma as experienced by two well-to-do Eastern women, Mrs. Hollbrook and Mrs. Neirsheimer. According to Leavitt, Hollbrook "worked in the field like a convict, forced to plant trees, hoe corn and perform all sorts of hard labor, and at night she was shut up in a cell and guarded." Hollbrook left Point Loma when her husband came and took her by force. Neirsheimer, who remained at the compound, had allegedly "been forcibly separated from her husband, who [was] also in the Tingley clutches, and is not allowed to speak to him." Describing Tingley as a "common dollar-taking spirit medium," whose education system for females consisted of menial and grueling labor, Leavitt accused the school of separating children in cells and starving them because "Mrs. Tingley openly states that children are fed too much for their spiritual good, and must eat but little, so that they will be more etherial (sic)." Leavitt also took umbrage with the system of separating children from their parents, incredulous of Tingley's claim that children "will grow up purer if away from the bodily and affectionate influence of the parents!" In Leavitt's estimation, the "gross immoralities...practiced at Point Loma by some of the

disciples of spookism...should not be tolerated by a civilized community."[93] Deploying the term "civilized community" at this time did not merely mean an industrially advanced society. Rather, using the term civilization, imbricated with hierarchical views of race, gender, and Protestant millennialism, positioned Tingley and her followers as "others." A "civilized society" had reached a high level of racial evolution, the pinnacle of which was encoded in the very biological make-up of Anglo-Saxons and other white people. A "civilized society" had high levels of sexual differentiation. A "civilized society" translated Protestant millennialism into a scheme where "superior races outsurviv[ed] inferior races" leading to a perfection of society.[94] Leavitt's charges of anti-civilization at the Râja Yoga School called into question the gender roles at the school and the "Oriental" and non-Protestant nature of the religion. Leavitt's suggestion that Californians should not tolerate Point Loma as a neighbor not only judged the school, but revealed fears that its influence could bleed beyond its borders. Ultimately, though, the veracity of either of these stories was insignificant in the face of a larger concern for Tingley and her "followers." True or not, the negative, sensational press narrowed their abilities to spread their Theosophical beliefs and pedagogical views of the Râja Yoga School.

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[93] "Outrages at Point Loma," *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922),* October 28, 1901. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164092347?accountid=7118.
[94] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 23-31.

Even after Tingley had filed her libel case against Times-Mirror Company and no more court cases against Tingley were forthcoming, on December 1901 the *Los Angeles Times* ran the following in its State Snapshots section:

A Point Loma 'Pome'
Tingle, Tingle little star
Oft I wonder who you are;
What you do isn't right.
Every blessed spooky night.

Tingle, Tingle little star
What a rotten sect you are.
Better take a way back seat
With your brassy, bold conceit[95]

In this small item the paper continued to teasingly lambast Tingley. The school "isn't right," but

"spooky." Tingley herself presented a "brassy bold conceit" in terms of her beliefs, and presumably, was attempting to act beyond her position as a woman by not already sitting in the subordinate "way back seat."[96]

The negative coverage of Tingley in California and the accusations of ill-treatment of women and children informed the decisions by the Gerry Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to investigate a group of Cuban children entering the U.S. in order to enroll at the Râja Yoga School. This was not simply a case about how

[95] "State Snapshots." *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)*, December 19, 1901, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164046955?accountid=7118.
[96] The subordination here could refer to her attempts to be in the "driver's seat" as opposed to the back seat, or in terms of trying to sit in the front, more expensive seats rather than the back theater seats meant for a racialized, underclass.

Tingley and her associates treated children, but a case of how the Râja Yoga School defied the hierarchical relationships between the U.S. and Cuba and India.

The interest surrounding Cuban children attending the Râja Yoga School spoke to what Albert Hurtado and Ann Stoler call the "'intimate frontiers' of empire, a social and cultural space where racial classification were defined and defied, where relations between colonizer and colonized could powerfully confound or confirm the strictures of governance and the categories of rule."[97] Though geographically distant, Tingley's efforts to bring Cubans into the U.S. to educate them in her "Oriental" religion thrust these three countries into intimate contact. The intimacy intoned here was not based on proximal location, but, as Lisa Lowe has stated, on intimacy as "privacy, often figured as conjugal and familial relations in the bourgeois home, distinguished from the public realm of work, society and politics."[98]

Newspapers and the Gerry Society viewed the Râja Yoga School's very bedrock as a threat to the "familial relations in the bourgeois home."[99] The introduction of the recently re-colonized Cuban children to the school fueled hostility and suspicion about the school's unorthodox living arrangements. By disrupting the conventional home, Tingley threatened the underlying hierarchical logic on which America rested its tenuous position as an emerging world power. As historian Laura Wexler, working from Ann Stoler's work, has suggested, "intimate arrangements of domestic life are more than just a

[97] Ann Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties" in Ann Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 34.
[98] Lisa Lowe "The Intimacies of Four Continents" in Ann Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 195.
[99] Ibid.

template for private behavior...[they] are a primary structural component of public life and a vehicle for the creation and enforcement of colonial hierarchy and postcolonial social formations."[100] With a stated goal of changing society, the Râja Yoga School disrupted narratives of power within the colonial world. Whereas the United States, following the Spanish American War, portrayed itself as liberators of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, in reality it also embarked on a colonial project under a different name within these territories. In terms of Asia and India in particular, the U.S. interests and cultural sensibilities aligned so closely with Great Britain that to suggest parity between India and the U.S. would not have made sense to contemporary observers. Thus, within the colonial order of the world, the U.S. felt socially, economically, and politically superior Cuba and India, giving the country the right to dictate, rather than receive, values from these "inferior" cultures; Tingley, in an effort to erase national distinctions in favor of spiritual universality, undermined America's position in regard to these colonies.

By 1898 Americans had begun to view Cubans as ungrateful "ruffian boys," and Tingley's determination to bring Cuban children into the country undermined that narrative. Rather than embrace the United States as a provider to "its less fortunate neighbors," Cubans resisted the imposition of power by another nation. American politicians and reporters cast the Spanish-American War as a "war for humanity," an effort to stop the colonial barbarism of the Spanish in the Western hemisphere and make the region a haven for democracy and freedom. As Louis Perez argues, the Spanish-

[100] Laura Wexler, "The Fair Ensemble: Kate Chopin in St. Louis in 1904" in Ann Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 273.

American war "served to fix the moral calculus by which the Americans thereafter imagined the purpose of their power and celebrated the virtue of their motives," to such a great extent that it became a hallmark of America's "national character."[101] Tingley, in her own efforts in Cuba, shared these lofty ideals, but Cuban resistance to this imposition revealed the United States participation in "empire building" which grated against the U.S.'s definition of itself that held a "deeply invested notion of itself as opposed to imperialism, the extent that even the Spanish-American War was justified as an anti-(Spanish) imperialist gesture."[102] The United States government, like in many other points in its history, couched wars and occupation in terms of liberation, but economic and political control motivated its actions in Cuba. While the U.S. newspapers reported "parables of progress" in Cuba in terms of improved civilization and morality, the U.S.'s increasing global economic power underlies this parable. Cuba offered a flow of currency between new markets and new labor, with Cubans buying American goods and coming to the U.S. to provide cheap labor.[103] Tingley, while not interested in the economic potential of Cuba, saw the close, war-torn nation in a similarly opportunistic light. The state of Cuba following the Spanish-American War left its inhabitants in need of aid, and framed an opportunity for Tingley to introduce a new population to Theosophy. While stemming from similarly self-interested aims as the United States,

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[101] Louis Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 6 & 7.
[102] Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico, (*Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 33.
[103] For more see: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 2000).

Tingley's determination to bring Cuban children to the Râja Yoga School challenged the economic nature of U.S.-Cuban relations. Moreover, by insisting, even after public opinion shifted towards a negative view of Cubans, that moral goodness and uplift could be achieved on the island nation through her Eastern religion, Tingley subverted America's narrative of itself as the nation with the core, Christian values best suited to help their unfortunate neighbors. Tingley's insistence on continued moral work with Cubans, even as the rest of the U.S. began to give up, highlighted the flimsiness of the U.S.'s intentions in colonizing Cuba.

Cuban children began attending the Râja Yoga School as early as 1900, but in the autumn of 1902 the Gerry Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children took an interest in the case of eleven Cuban children traveling through New York on their way to the school.[104] In general, between the 1870s and 1930s American society's ideas about childhood shifted from economic "worthlessness" to emotional "pricelessness"; a process that included Christian sacralization of the family and domesticity. This emerging view of children as more precious and vulnerable people resulted in the creation of various organizations, schools, and religious associations, like the Gerry Society, which sought to help children.[105] However, the case of the Cuban children entering the country pushed at this demarcation between economic "worthlessness" and emotional "pricelessness." On

[104] "The first group [of Cuban children] arrived in 1900, followed by a second in 1901 and later contingents in subsequent years. In 1903 a Râja Yoga School opened in Santiago de Cuba, followed by schools in Pinar del Rio in 1907 and Santa Clara in 1909, all staffed by Point Loma teachers. The three Cuban schools closed by 1912. After 1917 no Cuban pupils remained at Point Loma. Ashcraft, *The Dawn of the New Cycle,* 93.

[105] Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

the one hand, the Gerry Society did not want these priceless, vulnerable children to attend the Râja Yoga School, whose negative reputation in the Los Angeles *Times* had spread around the nation. On the other hand, suspicious of Cubans, the Gerry Society claimed the children's economic worthlessness would make them a burden on society. The concern regarding the children spoke to an uneasiness about the U.S. perceptions of Cubans and the fallout from reports from California about the nature of the Râja Yoga School.

Dr. Gertrude Van Pelt, who had spent time in Cuba meeting parents and conducting aid work on behalf of Tingley, gathered eleven children to bring to the Râja Yoga School.[106] As part of their commitment to improving themselves and the nation, the UBTS took an early and active role in sending aid to Cuba during the Spanish-American War. "Because of its long persecution, and bitter suffering in the recent war," particularly the condition of women's and children's lives under the policies of Spanish captain general of Cuba, Don Valeriano Weyler, Tingley focused her energy on Cuba. The war aid she directed extended to helping returning U.S. soldiers, which allowed her to gain enough appreciation that President McKinley granted her permission to enter Cuba and establish hospitals there. Hearing reports from Cuba, Tingley encouraged the workers to invite children to attend the Râja Yoga School; while the students came from

[106] Van Pelt was another example of strong female leadership within the Râja Yoga school. She obtained a degree from Cornell and attended the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia in 1886. She specialized in obstetrics and stomach diseases. Her work eventually brought her to Paris to continue her studies and eventually she became a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society. For more see: Deirdre M. Moloney, *National Insecurities: Immigrants and US Deportation Policy Since 1882*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

all types of backgrounds, the war had left most of their families in dire economic situations, losing property and, frequently their fathers—according to *The Path,* no more than four of the children had living fathers.[107]

Eleven of these children arrived at Ellis Island on November 1, 1902, via the Ward Line steamship *Orizaba* with VanPelt. Immediately, the Gerry Society petitioned immigration officials to have the students detained and returned to Cuba because they "would be a burden to the country, as they were without any means of support, and would be used for immoral purposes."[108] The burden to which the Gerry Society referred rested on an immigration provision that forbid the entrance of people thought "likely to become public charges"; this mainly effected women and children up until the 1920s.[109] Furthermore, this petition indicted both the Cuban children, because of their poverty, and the Râja Yoga School because of its immorality. In an editorial printed in the Omaha *World-Herald,* the author who sided with the UBTS, encapsulated the popular opinion of the Cuban émigrés as such: "Why, here these theosophists have gone down to Cuba and have got hold of the poor, little ignorant children, and are taking them to California to

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[107] "Katherine Tingley and Point Loma," *The Path –Supplement*, (Point Loma, California), June 20, 1909, Vol 12. No. 33, accessed, http://books.google.com/books?id=x1pDAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA33&lpg=PA33&dq=tingley+cuba&source=bl&ots=AufyJxyzDs&sig=_4JL8N8LjiFwKRb6nX-OHlEJLDY&hl=en#v=onepage&q=tingley%20cuba&f=false, 2

[108] "Cuban Tots Are Here," *The Washington Post*, December 9, 1902.

[109] Moloney, *National Insecurities,* 79-80. The provision did not make any specific mention of gender, but decisions in these cases rested on assumptions about proper gender roles and labor. During the Great Depression male immigrants were also rejected because of the LPC provision. Chapter three in Moloney's work offers an excellent history of the provision.

make heathen out of them."[110] Within this imagined declaration, the author struck upon the crux of the trial that the poor and ignorant Cubans needed guidance from the proper U.S. agents, not the Theosophists with their Eastern practices which would only turn them into heathens. To critics, Theosophists were thwarting the proper kind of civilizing that many Americans felt Cubans desperately needed.

Rather than an investigation of whether the Cuban children would potentially become wards of the United State, the inquiry led to a long interrogation on the character of Katherine Tingley. The evidence against Tingley and the Râja Yoga School included testimony from Henry Bohn, whose estranged wife and sons remained at the school. A former bookkeeper at Point Loma, Louis S. Fitch, testified at length that Tingley had tried to ruin his marriage; that she believed her dog, Spots, guided her via William Q. Judge's spirit; that she forced her followers to walk bare-footed; and, perhaps the only directly relevant piece of information to the trial, that the financial situation, which relied heavily on large individual donations, was "precarious." Fitch bluntly explained that the school was an inappropriate place for children; when his wife took the stand, she claimed that their son, who had briefly attended the school, "still [thought] grass had feelings and is hurt if stepped upon." [111] The initial trials conducted by the Ellis Island board of inquiry resulted in a unanimous decision to exclude the children from the United States and plans were made to send the children back to Cuba on November 13, 1902. After

[110] "A Religious Motive" an editorial from Omaha *World-Herald* of November 8, 1902 reprinted in *The New Century* 6, no. 11, (November, 23 1902), 7.
[111] "Cuban Children to be Sent Back" *New York Times,* November 8, 1902, accessed January 24, 2013 http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30910FA35591B728DDDA10894D9415B828CF1D3.

hearing testimony, the commissioner of the board agreed with the Fitches that Tingley was of questionable character, signed the deportation documents, and did not expect that an appeal would be forthcoming.[112]

Anxiety about Theosophy's negative influence on children was part of a larger trend in U.S. immigration policy that made it more difficult for non-Christians to emigrate to the country. In the Râja Yoga School immigration case the children were questioned about whether they had willingly left Cuba and for what purpose; each child "stated that their parents had arranged from them to go to California, obtain an education, become fluent in English, and return to Cuba permanently."[113] The children's same carefully crafted phrases were meant to convince interrogators that 1) the children had not been abducted; 2) they were here to learn from the U.S., not to spread their own ideas in the U.S.; and 3) had no intention of making the U.S. a permanent home. These answers diffused the lines of questioning immigration officials asked of non-Christians that "effectively hampered the development of new religious communities in the United States." Immigration officials made it clear to non-Christians that religious tolerance did indeed have its limits.[114]

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[112] "Children for Point Loma Will Be Excluded," *Press and Horticulturist,* November 11, 1902, accessed June 5, 2012, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2468&dat=19021111&id=XiozAAAAIBAJ&sjid=wgAGAAAAIBAJ&pg=5260,276944

[113] Moloney *National Insecurities,* 159. As Maloney points out the charges of converting Catholic children to theosophy was ironic since Catholic organizations had long charged Protestants in the U.S. with attempts of coercive conversion.

[114] Ibid.,161. Of course quotas on people from nation-states where Christianity was not the dominant religion were also limiting the variety of religious communities within the U.S.

As Ellis Island officials sided with the Gerry Society, Tingley did not give up the fight, and persuaded the federal government and the state of California to become involved in the investigation. The Râja Yoga School had many powerful friends during the investigation and had a large amount of economic sway in San Diego as a "tourist destination long before Disneyland and the Crystal Cathedral;" local politicians and businessmen rallied to support the school.[115] As a result, the San Diego Chamber of Commerce came to the school's defense in a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State. In the letter the Chamber of Commerce argued that the school was "properly managed and that children attending the same are well cared for." The authors cited the fact that "a number of conveniently-arranged buildings provide comfortable quarters for the school children whose bright faces and neat appearance plainly evidence kind treatment and careful attention."[116] In addition to the Chamber of Commerce's support, San Diego Mayor Frank Frary met with Immigration Commissioner Frank Sargent at The Râja Yoga School as the commissioner prepared to investigate the conditions of the school and its financial records.[117] The efforts of Tingley's supporters worked, and, following his investigation, Commissioner General Sargent declared "that the Point Loma School was one of the most remarkable institutions in the United States and that he had never seen

[115] Evelyn Kirkley, "Starved and Treated Like Convicts: Images of the Women of Point Loma Theosophy," *The Journal of San Diego History,* 43 no. 1 (1997), accessed January 24, 2013 http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/97winter/theosophical.htm
[116] "Inspector Coming Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922*), November 18, 1902. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164195587?accountid=7118.
[117] "Sargent Sleeps in Tingley Spookery," *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)*, November 22, 1902. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164098138?accountid=7118.

children apparently so well cared for mentally and physically."[118] Thus vindicated by the federal government, VanPelt and the eleven children were allowed to enter the United States.[119] After arriving at the school, Tingley did indeed encourage the Cuban children to recognize their nationality and heritage, as seen in the image celebrating Cuban Independence Day circa 1902. The celebration marked a tenuous freedom for Cuba, with the U.S. still maintaining economic control and the right to intervene in Cuban affairs as the U.S. saw fit. Here the children of the Râja Yoga School exalted freedom and the nation-state, but within the context of the education provided them, which would have reinforced freedom, character, and a spiritual calling to help build a better future in Cuba.

As a result of the investigation, the UBTS attempted to reframe the image of the Râja Yoga School. One of its members, Tyburg, told the press "the Râja Yoga School was a non-sectarian institution that no Theosophic beliefs were taught there to the exclusion of all others, and that the institution was intended for the general education of its inmates and not for any training in religious beliefs."[120] The Râja Yoga School did educate its pupils about Christianity and other religions, but the very core values of the school were based in Theosophy. Thus Tyburg's explanation of the school should be read as an attempt to stem the negative press surrounding the school, rather than a radical alteration of its beliefs in the wake of controversy.

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[118] ""Lotus Buds" Admitted," *New York Times (1857-1922),* December 07, 1902, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/96215527?accountid=7118.
[119] There entrance to the country involved a hasty departure under darkness on a boat hired by A.G. Spalding, of the sporting goods company, and rushed out of New York in case the Gerry Society attempted to detain them once they entered the state. "Charles Semsey, Hungarian Patriot, Union Soldier, and Ellis Island Official" Vasvary Collection Newsletter, January 2004, accessed January 24, 2013, http://epa.oszk.hu/00900/00960/00003/beszedits.html.
[120] "Cuban Tots Are Here."

Concurrent with the investigation of the Cuban students, Tingley had to contend with another scandal that questioned her role as a mother and her Americanness. Henry Baron, who claimed to be Katherine Tingley's biological son, came to the media to explain his "escape" from the school. Baron alleged that Tingley had stolen his inheritance and lied about their biological connection. When asked about his time at the Râja Yoga School, reporters emphasized his comments about food. Baron criticized the amount and types of food being served. "For dinner we had vegetables and bread and butter, but we never eat meat. I suppose they think our souls abhor meat."[121] Vegetarianism had a small, dedicated following in the United States at the turn of the century. However, coming on the heels of labor-leader Samuel Gompers' essay "Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion. Meat Versus Rice. American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?" (1901), Baron's charge against diet at the Râja Yoga School implied that the school was not truly invested in the national interests. The Râja Yoga School's vegetarianism coded it as foreign and corrosive to the individual and the nation.

Following the settlement of the Cuban School Children, Tingley continued to receive negative press from the libel case against the Time-Mirror Corporation. The trial continued from December 1902 to January 1903. Despite the positive investigations of Point Loma, the coverage of the trial continued to describe Tingley's "code of social and moral ethics" as "most extraordinary." Courtroom media reports once again publicized that Tingley "[did] not believe in marriage...and prefers illegitimate children to children

[121] "Young Fugitive Says he is Son of Mrs. Tingley" *Chicago Daily Tribune,* November 18, 1902, 5.

born in wedlock, because...illegitimate children are the offspring of pure and baby love, while those born to parents united in matrimony are the children of lust."[122] Former bookkeeper Louis Fitch once again came to testify against Tingley, entering an affidavit into the trial and while the judge did not include Fitch's comments on Tingley's "supernatural" abilities, they did enter comments on the general treatment of the residents and financial information. In terms of morality, the clothing worn at the school was included: "I [Fitch] have seen them low neck; as low as the average evening gown. I have seen some one with a toga crossed in the front and brought around in the back; was indecent in its effect."[123] Once again issues of children, morality, public decency, and choices women made about their bodies and domestic conditions became a point of contention in discussing Tingley's character. Despite this debate, the law remained on Tingley's side and awarded her damages from the Times Mirror Company for libel in 1907.

Tingley continued to oversee the Râja Yoga School at Point Loma until her death in 1929, when its name changed and residents began leaving the community in large numbers. Her triumph over the Mirror-Times Company slowed news coverage, and increased public debates about women's rights made Tingley's leadership less questionable to more forward-thinking individuals. For Tingley, progress towards

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[122] "Sacred Dog "Spot" Slips His Collar," *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922),* December 21, 1902, accessed January 24, 2013, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/164098707?accountid=7118.
[123] "Libel Suit of Leader Tingley," *The Spokesman-Review,* December 23, 1902, accessed June 5, 2012 http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1314&dat=19021223&id=lNMUAAAAIBAJ&sjid=VJsDAAAAIBAJ&pg=6532,6305668, 8

women's suffrage pushed her towards more conservative views of womanhood stating in 1915: "I believe in the equality of the sexes, but I hold that man has a mission and that woman has also a mission, and that these missions are not the same."[124] The lack of media visibility and Tingley's less radical views pushed Point Loma further from the public view, until it eventually closed its doors in 1942.

The Râja Yoga School, if not in action then certainly in name, contributed a small but potent narrative to Americans' understanding of what yoga could mean. The taint of mysticism and accusations of fraud surrounding Theosophy and the sensational nature of Tingley's Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society operated within a historical period fearful of challenges to gendered, racial, and national hierarchies, leaving outsiders susceptible to a view of yoga as only a vague set of instructions meant to brainwash, and otherwise do damage to, vulnerable Americans. This perception of yoga would intensify in another set of scandals beginning in the 1910s through the 1930s, as Pierre Bernard caught the attention of the New York media with his enthusiasm for Tantrik yoga, which sparked even greater cultural anxiety about the connections between sexuality and yoga than Tingley.

[124] Katherine Tingley et. al *Woman's Mission: Short Addresses by Katherine Tingley and Other Officials of the Woman's International Theosophical League....February 7, 1915* (Point Loma, CA: Woman's Theosophical League, 1915), 24-25. Quoted in Evelyn Kirkley, ""Equality of the Sexes, But...": Women in Point Loma Theosophy, 1899-1942," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 1 no. 2(April 1998), 272.

Chapter Two: From the 'Omnipotent Oom' to the Clarkstown Country Club: The Changing Business of Yoga from the 1910s to 1930s.

At the same time the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society taught their interpretation of yoga in southern California, Pierre Bernard, a young Iowan, was just being introduced to yoga in Lincoln, Nebraska. From this introduction, Bernard developed his own interpretations of the practice fueled by interests in truth, sexuality, and money, and became one of the most prominent and infamous yoga teachers between the 1910s and 1930s. Whereas Tingley taught yoga in terms of her Progressive Era ideals, Bernard found his footing in the Jazz Age, eventually attracting an eclectic group of New Yorkers including members of high society, bohemians, intellectuals, and Ziegfeld Follies girls. Unlike Tingley, Bernard did not concern himself with domesticity or shaping future citizens. Instead, Bernard focused on individual needs and desires, which shifted from the exuberant, sexually exploratory 1920s to the more conservative and cautious economic concerns of the 1930s. In his most active years, from 1910 to 1940, Bernard promoted physical postures in yoga practices and shaped a conflicting popular perception of yoga that tacked between an intense cultish, sexually taboo practice to a way for people with leisure time to cultivate a better and more efficient life. Recently, Pierre Bernard has earned the reputation as the father of American yoga because of his emphasis on physical postures, or *asanas*; however, even more influential than the inclusions of the *asanas*, Bernard's life as a yoga teacher illustrates the shift in

popular understandings of yoga away from fears of cultishness toward greater acceptance of yoga's potential physical and mental benefits.

This chapter expands upon recent bibliographical accounts of Bernard and his role in popularizing postural yoga by examining how shifting cultural and economic attitudes influenced Bernard's development of his own style of yoga, which contributed to a baseline of knowledge about yoga in the United States at the time. By chronicling his movement from the Midwest to his final yoga retreat in Nyack, New York, one sees Bernard's reputation develop from a notorious and sexually predatory yogi to one focused on the business of yoga. In conjunction with the broader social changes from the 1910s to the 1930s, Bernard's biography shows how changing attitudes about sexuality, the body, and personal development influenced perceptions of yoga in the United States. In his earlier career, the New York papers shaped the public's understanding of yoga as they chronicled Bernard's legal battles, dubbing him "Oom the Omnipotent." The press's sensationalized coverage of Bernard and his students helped create an exaggerated image of yoga as a sexually charged cult in the opening decades of the twentieth century that speaks to the concerns of contemporary vice squads and the policing of sexuality, coverage that novelist Edith Wharton would use as a centerpiece in her final novel *Twilight Sleep* in 1927. Wearied by scandal throughout the 1920s and the changing fortunes of Americans during the Great Depression, Bernard shifted his teachings away from a focus on sexuality toward more conservative efforts of self-improvement and efficient living, acting more like the yogi version of Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936), than a deviant sexual predator.

Perry Arnold Baker from Leon, Iowa

Pierre Bernard, né Perry Arnold Baker in 1875, grew up in the small Iowan city of Leon about 70 miles south of Des Moines. Despite not growing up in one of the large urban centers and directly experiencing the social upheavals of immigration, economic inequality, and industrialization that informed attitudes in the Gilded Age, Bernard would grow to find his niche among elite New Yorkers. Bernard came of age when Victorian values still pervaded the American landscape, but early in his lifetime those values began to give way to new middle class progressive movements that, in its varied collection of organizations, sought to bring order to "an industrializing society that generated dismaying extremes of wealth and poverty, tempting new pleasures, alien cultures, and frightening antagonisms."[1] As progressives sought to reconcile the changing culture and shape the country's future, many members of the wealthiest class, rather than contend directly with the social upheaval surrounding them, looked to individualized pursuits in the forms of physical exercises, spiritual seeking, mental improvement, and appreciation of the arts to cope with societal changes without disrupting or challenging their privilege. Bernard spent his youth cloistered away in Leon, reading and learning from his grandfather, the town physician. At the age of thirteen, his family sent him to Lincoln, Nebraska to apprentice in the construction trade. In Lincoln, Bernard's interest in philosophical matters lead him away from construction toward a local Indian philosopher

[1] Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*, (New York: Free Press, 2003), xiv.

from Calcutta, India, named Sylvais Hamati, who sought to help individuals gain greater perspective on the rapid upheaval around them by focusing on the self.[2]

Even in a larger city like Lincoln, Sylvais Hamati would have stood out as one of the few, if not only, Indian residents, his visibility compounded by his position as a teacher of Tantrik philosophy.[3] In Lincoln Hamati promoted himself as a tutor of "Vedic philosophy," even though his interests largely lay in the exploration of Tantra. As scholar Hugh Urban has explained, historically, Americans have had an incomplete understanding of Tantra, viewing it as a collection of sexually deviant acts rather than an entire, complex system: "Defined as the oath of ecstasy, the yoga of sex, Tantra is usually identified as that religious path which combines the physical experience of sexual pleasure with the spiritual experience of liberation."[4] Urban goes on to argue that power, not sex, grounds Tantrik practices as they center around the Goddess Shakti, "the creative energy source which radiates out of the supreme consciousness of Lord Shiva," making Tantra more about "power on all levels of reality, spiritual cosmic, physical and socio-political alike."[5] While Urban's work expands an understanding of Tantra, it also helps explain Bernard's later departure from a focus on sexuality. Bernard's interests, even

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[2] More detailed biographical information is available in Robert Love, *The Great Oom: The Improbable Birth of Yoga in America*, (New York: Viking, 2010), and to a lesser extent Stefanie Syman, *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

[3] As discussed in the previous chapter very few Indians lived in America prior to 1965, giving Hamati a monopoly on "Oriental Spirituality" in his city.

[4] Hugh B. Urban, "The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and Its Impact on Modern Western Esotercism (Ohio State University), accessed January 23, 2013 http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIII/HTML/Oom.html.

[5] Urban presents these interesting observations in "The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and Its Impact on Modern Western Esotericism http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIII/HTML/Oom.html?ref=nf. While Urban's work on Tantra is exceptional the information he provides on Pierre Bernard is incomplete and Robert Love is a far better source for biographical information. For more on Tantra see Hugh Urban's other work: Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

from a young age, lay in questions of spirituality, self-improvement, and empowerment in whatever form suited him at the time. As a curious and ambitious young man, Bernard found in Hamati a way to leave the Midwest and travel to new places doing meaningful, lucrative work. According to Bernard, he worked under Hamati for eighteen years, practicing and teaching yoga for "up to three hours a day."[6] In 1895, on Bernard's seventeenth birthday, he followed Hamati to California where Bernard continued to study with Hamati the intellectual, spiritual, and "advanced physical culture" of yoga, including *asanas*, breath work, and meditation. Bernard recalled his training under Hamati as such: "As a small boy, I was placed in the hands of Hamati to mold as he might fit and proper, and the ideal to reach was the Yoga in its fullness and that means to live the study, and that I have done to date and expect to do it to the end."[7] Bernard portrays himself as a serious student in response to later criticism that he was nothing more than a huckster, but in a configuration of Tantra as a means of achieving power and mastery over one's environment despite any of Bernard's perceived shortcomings or contradictions, he did maintain a practical application of yoga throughout his life.

Bernard's move to California followed a growing interest in Indian philosophy after Swami Vivekananda's address at the Parliament of the World's Religions at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Seeking better opportunities to spread Hamati's teaching and make money, Hamati and Bernard settled in San Francisco in 1896, where they lived in boardinghouses teaching hypnotism and yoga to physicians and wealthy San Franciscans. As Bernard gathered followers, he also became a medical curiosity. In

[6] Love, *The Great Oom,* 13.
[7] Ibid., 14.

1898, before a collection of about 40 physicians, Bernard performed the Kali Mudra, a deep trance that would allow him to undergo "surgical procedures" without anesthesia. The demonstration involved the piercing of his ear, cheek, upper lip, and nose and culminated dramatically with a lady's hatpin stuck through the center of his tongue. Newspapers across the country reported on the first Kali Mudra demonstration and the attendant physicians affirmed the feat, with one calling it "one of the best counterfeits for death" he had ever witnessed.[8] Ultimately, the Kali Mudra experiment expanded Bernard's following to at least seventy-two students each paying $100 to learn Bernard's techniques.[9]

The financial and professional success that followed the Kali Mudra experiment reinforced Bernard's commitment to the physical power of yoga and his desire to capitalize on it. His ability to find financial success through yoga reflected a larger cultural interest in hypnotism and mesmerism, not only among spiritual seekers and lovers of novelty, but also among physicians. While professionalization of the medical community throughout the nineteenth century had limited the acceptance of alternative medicines, the possibility of a safe alternative to anesthesia was still a valuable pursuit.[10] Physicians' interests in the Kali Mudra experiment also lent a note of credibility to Bernard's teachings. Received not as a mere quack or sideshow performer, Bernard became a legitimate medical wonder who had mastered his body in previously

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[8] "Puzzle to Physicians," *The Washington Post (1877-1922)*, (May 1, 1898) retrieved from http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/143985482?accountid=7118
[9] Love, *The Great Oom*, 23.
[10] Natalie Robins, *Copeland's Cure: Homeopathy and the War Between Conventional and Alternative Medicine,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); and Love, *The Great Oom*, 22-23.

unimagined ways. This early legitimization of his work protected Bernard from later allegations and secured his financial resources to ensure that subsequent accusations of sexual misconduct would not ruin him entirely.

Bernard's Vira Sidhama *and Sexuality in Yoga*

By 1905, Bernard began to take a more prominent role in his partnership with Hamati, and they expanded the business from private instructions and demonstrations to create Bernard's first permanent organization, the Tantrik Order in San Francisco, where he began to refine his ideas about the body and sexuality. The Tantrik Order offered classes in philosophy, Sanskrit, and yoga to wealthy San Franciscans, but Bernard only required that his students take yoga in rooms "padded with four-inch hair mats." Bernard intended these *asanas* to strengthen the body in order to strengthen the soul, indicating his early adoption of the belief that an individual needed to achieve physical health before striving toward spiritual health.[11] By 1906, Bernard felt knowledgeable enough to write his own exegesis on yoga. Incorporating symbols and philosophy from a variety of Eastern groups, Bernard, with Hamati's help, wrote the *Vira Sadhana: International Journal of the Tantrik Orde*r, which included overt mentions of sexuality, a radical but not unheard of approach at the time. In the *Vira Sadhana* he wrote that society's suppression of sexuality had become the norm, thus ignoring sex as "the cause of our individual existence, but it is [also] the foundation of society and the well spring of human life and happiness."[12] Implicitly Bernard decried society's negative attitude as an unfortunate departure from man's natural state as a sexual being. Bernarr Macfadden, the

[11]Syman, *The Subtle Body,* 92.
[12] Love, *The Great Oom,* 38.

famous proponent of physical culture, held a similar view about the role of sexuality in humans' well being and led an "attack on 'the curse of prudishness'" in *The Virile Powers of Superb Manhood* (1900). Macfadden emphatically hated prudes and declared them "murderers of womanhood and manhood.... and I would take grim pleasure in seeing every last one of them struggling in the throes of death at the end of a hangman's noose."[13] While Bernard never made such hostile proclamations, he and Macfadden exhibited the loosening attitudes about sexuality, both believing that "virility was actually a criterion for complete health."[14] Beyond the importance of sexuality for health, for Bernard, sexuality also functioned as a cornerstone for finding truth and power in the world.

Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Volume I* (1978) provides an analytical framework in which to examine the sexual attitudes that informed Bernard's interpretations of yoga. In his work Foucault revised the commonly held belief that "modern industrial societies ushered in an age of increased sexual repression." Instead, Foucault argued that various centers of authority undertook "to protect...signaling peril everywhere, awakening people's attention...radiated discourses aimed at sex, intensifying people's awareness of it as a constant danger, and this in turn created further incentive to talk about it."[15] In other words, suppressing, policing, and pathologizing deviant sexuality created a proliferation of knowledge about and discussion

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[13] Bernarr Macfadden, *The Power and Beauty of Superb Womanhood*, (New York, 1901), 63 quoted in James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 301.
[14] Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 299.
[15] Michel Foucault, translated by Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 30-31, 49.

of sexuality, not a silencing of sexuality. In addition to the issues of articulation and repression of sexuality, Foucault explained how sex operated in the discovery of truth, the core of Bernard's ideology. Foucault established two clearly delineated "truths of sex": *ars erotica* and *scienta sexualis*. Bernard and Macfadden taught "sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamentally useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable"; in other words, through sexual exploration one could discover "Truth."[16] The first path to truth via sexuality took the form of *ars erotica*, where societies throughout time drew sexual truth from sex "experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of intensity, its specific qualities, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul." The power of this sexuality resided in not only the experience, but also the secrecy surrounding sex. Widespread circulation of this type of sexual exploration would not necessarily denigrate society, but could dilute the potency of sex as a category. The second truth, *scienta sexualis*, involved "procedures for telling the truth of sex," which, illustrated best in sexual confessions that worked in a larger matrix of sexual discourse requiring the organization of sex under judicial, medical, religious, and social codes. This unknowableness becomes "the point of weakness where evil portents reach through us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us...a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends."[17] Both paths to truth hinged on secrecy that contained the potential positive and negative effects of unbridled sexuality. Despite the similar silencing that defined these two paths to Truth, Foucault drew a geographic

[16] Ibid., 56.
[17] Ibid., 69.

distinction between the two categories where *scienta sexualis* defined sexuality in Western society and *ars erotica* functioned primarily in the East. Bernard's public battle to teach yoga that could be categorized as *ars erotica* made it all the more difficult to absorb into U.S. culture at the time. Certainly the policing of Bernard and his yoga school show the dominance of *scienta sexualis*, but the participation and interest in Bernard's deviant yoga also show that *ars erotica* did have a place, if only on the fringe, in Western society.

Bernard and Macfadden's open embrace of sexual power gave newspapers one way to talk about sexuality in a public forum under the guise of policing deviant behavior. After the publication of the *Vira Sadhana* and increasingly after he moved to New York in 1910, Bernard became a part of the discourse of threatening sexuality that gained momentum in the early twentieth century. Bernard's flagrant disregard for "proper" sexual discourse based on ideas of suppression allowed newspapers and law enforcement to foreground a narrative of dangerous, exotic sexuality in Bernard's teachings. Bernard's yoga philosophy centered on sex at this time; however, the sensational reporting surrounding his trials did more to frame yoga as a series of sexually deviant acts than anything he himself wrote or taught.

Bernard's notoriety, fueled by the work of Anthony Comstock's Society for the Suppression of Vice, as well as anxieties against the trafficking of white women, reached its peak in 1910.[18] In the first few decades of the twentieth century, the eradication of vice and prurience in New York City touched many aspects of people's lives. As H.L.

[18] The anxieties about the trafficking of white women would eventually lead to the creation of the White-Slave Traffic Act better known as the Mann Act of 1913.

Mencken wrote to a friend in 1921 about a story he planned on publishing in the *Smart Set*, "a very good novelette by a new writer. But there are two hoors in it, and I fear we'll have to sin in jail for a few weeks...Every civilized American will spend a few weeks of every year in a jail hereafter."[19] What befell Bernard, Mencken, and numerous others in New York City was a part of a strong conservative movement in the city "marked by cultural caution, moralism, censoriousness, and self-righteousness."[20] As conservatives attempted to police sexual behavior, younger people reading the sensationalized accounts of people like Bernard took an interest in his taboo behavior. In an interview in the late 1980s, a former student explained that on some level media reports intrigued her and her sister, "because after all Pierre Bernard was well known through the tabloids of the day as a very dangerous character, or unsavory character....They'd be written up as having made this place a sort of sex cult and a love place and what not."[21] Sensationalized depictions of the unsavory guru led this student and her sister to him out of 'natural' curiosity and general teenage rebelliousness.

The exotic, Eastern nature of Bernard's teachings compounded the attraction of the taboo sexuality. The *Washington Post* depicted Bernard as part of "the broadening stream of morbidly alluring Oriental 'philosophies'" making its way in the United States. Declaring "Hindu occultism" a "leprous" behavior, The *Washington Post* exaggeratedly claimed Bernard had 100,000 followers in the United States and that "the Tantriks are

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[19] Mencken to Fielding Hudson Farrison, February 11, 1921, *Letters of H.L. Mencken*, 218 quoted in Eric Homberger, "New York City and the Struggle of the Modern," Christopher Bigsby, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 323.
[20] Ibid., 315.
[21] Rockland County 28 July 1987, folder 48, box 1, Viola Wertheim Bernard Papers, 1918-2000, Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY), 9-10.

reputed to be the most wonderful practitioners of 'black magic' in the world. They can cause bodily or mental suffering as desired." According to the report, the "'kaula rite' or woman worship," described as a Bacchanalia, and the worship of Baal and Moloch formed the center of Bernard's practice, "the most popular in America."[22] The entire report framed Bernard, and others like him, as an "other," luring young, naive women into a hypnotic "Oriental" trap. As feminist scholar Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has explained, race is a metalanguage that "calls attention to its powerful all-encompassing effect on the construction and representation of other social and power relations."[23] In the interesting case of Bernard, a white, American-born yogi, his choice of profession positioned him as closer to Indian than white. Nonetheless, Bernard's most scandalous days predated the 1923 Supreme Court case of United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, in which the majority opinion stated: "It may be true that the blond Scandinavian and the brown Hindu have a common ancestor in the dim reaches of antiquity, but the average man knows perfectly well that there are unmistakeable and profound differences between them today."[24] The Thind opinion relied not on some objective science, but on the common knowledge of contemporary Americans that "brown Hindus" were not Caucasian. Bernard, as a white man adopting Indian practices, inhabited the tense space

[22] "This soul destroying poison of the east!" *The Washington Post (1877-1922)*, May 28, 1911. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/145105630?accountid=7118.
[23] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17 no. 2 (1992), 252
[24] United States *v.* Bhagat Singh Thind, Certificate From The Circuit Court Of Appeals For The Ninth Circuit., No. 202. Argued January 11, 12, 1923.—Decided February 19, 1923, *United States Reports,* v. 261, The Supreme Court, October Term, 1922, 204–215 from "Not All Caucasians Are White: The Supreme Court Rejects Citizenship for Asian Indians," *History Matters*, accessed January 13, 2013 http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5076/.

where culture appropriation had the potential to thrust Bernard out of his privileged societal position onto the cusp of an unassimilable identity.

Through his immersion in Tantrik yoga, Bernard found himself in a liminal position between accepted sexual behavior as defined by class and race. By "playing Indian," to alter and borrow a phrase from Philip DeLoria, Bernard could explore aspects of spirituality and sexuality rejected in mainstream society. This masquerade liberated Bernard and made it easier for the press to exaggerate the potential danger Bernard's teaching posed. According to Foucault, the bourgeoisie at this time "sought to redefine the specific character of its sexuality relative to that of others, subjecting it to a thorough differential review, and tracing a dividing line that would set apart and protect the body." In other words, more economically, politically, and socially privileged members of society monitored a rigorous set of laws and social codes regarding sexual decency that served to separate themselves from the "deviant" others outside their economic and racial ranks.[25] Bernard's evolution from a medical wonder on the West Coast, to a position as a sexual deviant, to an eventual teacher to some of the "best" people in Manhattan, exposed the porousness of these boundaries.

Moving East

Though based on the west coast until 1909, Bernard had begun making trips to New York City to teach private lessons to actresses, including the famous actor Lilian Russell, and to run the Tantrik Press. After traveling back and forth and drawing increased police interest on the West coast, Bernard decided to move to New York

[25] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* 128.

permanently, bringing some of his followers with him. In Manhattan, Bernard quickly established a new yoga school in a brownstone at 258 West 74th Street with an additional "sanitarium"—a small, private apartment at 70 West 109th Street. The following Bernard enjoyed on the West Coast did not come as quickly in New York; however, after six months, Bernard did start enrolling enough students to once again support himself and his followers.

Soon after he began to attract more students, Bernard started to attract greater notoriety in New York. As his new school gained momentum, jealousies flared between two young women, Zelia Hopp and Gertrude Leo, both of whom had been his lovers. Leo had followed Bernard to New York from the West Coast ostensibly to serve as his stenographer, and Hopp, who initially paid Bernard one hundred dollars to stay at his "sanitarium," had begun seeing him to deal with heart trouble. The arrival of Zelia Hopp led to a tense love triangle that, according to Leo, began when Bernard anticipated "get[ting] some money out of [Hopp]," but in order to do so he jokingly "promised to marry her" because "she was a good girl... and the promise was necessary."[26] Unlike Leo, Hopp needed Bernard to propose marriage before she would have sex with him. However, the trouble with the arrangement happened after Bernard convinced the two women to have a ménage à trois.[27] According to Hopp's later testimony, Bernard initially treated her heart condition in an entirely normal and acceptable manner, but through his

[26] "Gertrude Leo's Story as New York Paper Printed It" *The Tacoma Times* May 18, 1910 http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085187/1910-05-18/ed-1/seq-6/
[27] This appears in both Syman's *The Subtle Body,* 94 and Love, *The Great Oom.*

"strong hypnotic influence over her" she "submitt[ed] to improper treatment."[28] In Hopp's testimony we see the coy reference to sex that the newspapers could print, allowing them to discuss sex without actually mentioning it. Though Hopp's testimony insinuated that Bernard coerced her into having sex with him, she in fact instigated the entire investigation in order to move Leo out of the school. Hopp contacted Leo's sister, Mrs. Hanford, to "rescue" Leo from Bernard's clutches—a rescue that would allow Hopp to carry on her affair with Bernard without interference from her rival.[29] Hanford immediately headed to New York from Tacoma, Washington, and, with Hopp's help, asked the New York City police department to rescue her sister. A midnight raid occurred and the police found Bernard leading a yoga class on the second floor.[30] In the room the police "found five girls, attired, in men's bathing suits, and eight elderly men. The men were on their haunches around a rug in the middle of the floor, upon which the girls were dancing under the direction of Bernard."[31] An outraged paper in Oregon reported, under the headline "White Slaver Admits Guilt," that "'Om' explained that the motion was part of the occult science he was teaching."[32] Still another paper more accurately described the dancing as a series of exercises where the women "were

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[28] ""Omnipotent Oom" Held as Kidnapper." *New York Times (1857-1922),* May 04, 1910. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/97064128?accountid=7118.
[29] Mrs. Hanford is also referred to as Mrs. Miller from Tacoma Washington in various accounts listed here.
[30] "'Healer' Raided: Girls Tell of Weird Dance in Hindoo Den" *The Daily Star*, May 4, 1910, accessed January 23, 2013 http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1297&dat=19100504&id=hcxNAAAAIBAJ&sjid=PooDAAAAIBAJ&pg=6026,2398749
[31] Ibid.
[32] "White Slaver Admits Guilt" *Medford Mail Tribune*, Medford, Oregon May 4, 1910, accessed January 23, 2013 http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/97071090/1910-05-04/ed-1/seq-2/;words=Bernard+Pierre?date1=1836&rows=20&searchType=basic&state=&date2=1922&proxtext=pierre+bernard&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&index=15

tumbling on a mat, which had strange figures on it."[33] As further indictment of the bizarre happenings at the yoga school, papers reported that Bernard presided over the exercises "standing by a crystal ball and was clad in tights that came to his knees and a jersey on which were some queer figures."[34] Festooned in this unusual outfit, the police paraded Bernard and his followers down the street to the nearest precinct. The coverage of the initial raid cast Bernard as manner of lunatic wizard running a school that taught the arts of the occult, whose primary activity included older men watching girls dance in men's bathing suits, which at the time consisted of a one-piece, sleeveless outfit a brief step away from full nudity. The aftermath of the raid and the scintillating reports of scantily clad girls made Bernard a household name throughout New York City and inspired some reporters to further investigate his yoga teachings. In early May 1910, newspapers wrote salacious stories of "Oom, the Self-styled God," "Oom the Oriental," "the Great God Oom," "Hindoo Mystic," "Yogi Priest," "Head of Queer School," or just plain "the Oom." The *New York Times* reported that based on the accusations that Bernard had abducted young women, the judge placed Bernard on $15,000 bail, ensuring that he stayed in jail.

Without a basis to understand yoga, the reports about Bernard centered on the young girls at his school dancing erotically, a concept linked to the influential Delsarte system and an interest in Ruth St. Denis's performance of "Radha." As discussed earlier, a renewed interest in experience and truth exploded in the early twentieth century among bohemians and elites, of which the Delsarte system became a part. Francois Delsarte's

[33] "Omnipotent Oom held as Kidnapper."
[34] Ibid.

system of movement, which he based on an aesthetic interpretation of the Christian Holy Trinity, spoke to the desire for truth discovered via experience. The Delsarte system found its way into middle-class women's homes by the late 1880s, where women could be found in statue poses and states of pantomime in order to achieve relaxation and also energy in hopes of achieving a "transcendent spirituality."[35] Ruth St. Denis, now remembered as one of the "mothers of modern dance," trained under the Delsarte and studied Theosophy at an early age, a background that shaped St. Denis's modern dance style for the rest of her life.[36] St. Denis began her career "as a skirt dancer in a dime museum variety show," where she developed an interest in ancient goddess culture that led to her breakthrough to respectability in 1906 with her performance of "Radha," a dance that incorporated her understanding of Hinduism.[37] In the dance, St. Denis, dressed as the goddess Radha, explored the five senses in front of a group of male priests, eventually collapsing in orgasmic pleasure coupled with the shame of public displays of sexuality on the stage. At the end of the climax, St. Denis returned to the altar to sit in meditation. According to dance scholar Jane Desmond, the "Radha" did more than operate as an example of American interest in exotica at the time; it fulfilled "the ethnographic urge to represent the other for the pleasure and uses of the representer combined with the display of sexuality sanctified by the confessional code" as described

[35] Jane Desmond, "Dancing out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's "Radha" of 1906," *Signs*, 17, No. 1 (Autumn, 1991), 36.
[36] The influence of Theosophy did not hold and St. Denis turned instead to Christian Science as she became an adult.
[37] According to Desmond, Mrs. Orland Rowland who loved dance and the Orient took an interest in St. Denis's performance and hired her to dance for her society friends. It was so popular among her friends that the show began attracting large audiences when she staged it on Broadway.

by Foucault.[38] Similarly, media reports of the goings-on at Bernard's studio also permitted audiences to act as voyeurs while reaffirming their separateness from a sexualized, "oriental" other. Like St. Denis, the women in Bernard's company became non-white, which "had the effect of sexualizing" the women even further.[39] The legacy of St. Denis's dancing informed both the type of people attracted to Bernard's studio and the media's take in reporting Bernard's legal problems. After moving to New York, many young dancers, mostly in the chorus line, took lessons from Bernard and some would go on to teach, having already achieved the flexibility and strength necessary to perform the yoga *asanas*. Bernard and some of his key followers targeted the young dancers as potential students and teachers, trading in part on Ruth St. Denis's fame.

The connection between yoga and the dances of St. Denis was evident in the prurient reportage of *The New York Sun's* long profile on Gertrude Leo, which described in detail the role of the "nautch girl." According to the *Sun,* Bernard explained to Leo that rather than work as his stenographer in New York she would serve as his "nautch girl" who "took the place of the priest's wife, that they were always well cared for, that they had the best the world could offer and that they were always considered holy girls."[40] Despite Bernard's claims of holiness, in the U.S., "nautch girls" were known as dancers, disconnected from any spiritual path. In a popular fantasy the "nautch girl is the Alpha and Omega of Hindoo civilization...hav[ing] seen her in fantastic illustrations,

[38] Desmond, "Dancing out the Difference." 46. In an interesting side note Desmond says that St. Denis would not take her dance south of the Mason Dixon line because of racial animosity.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "Gertrude Leo's Story as New York Paper Printed It," *The Tacoma Times,* May 18, 1910, accessed January 25, 2013, http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085187/1910-05-18/ed-1/seq-6/

dancing on the marble terrace of the Taj, at Agra, with moonlight gleaming on the palm-trees, and the sacred river rolling its waters at her feet."[41] Exoticism, desire, and power played out in the fantasy of the nautch girl that embodied a submissive, sexual partner who tapped into sublimated desires to control parts of the colonial world. Bernard's description of the nautch girl attempted to convey his sexual intentions, but also soften the impropriety of sex outside of marriage via the sanctity of religious service.

The papers portrayed Bernard and his yoga school as a mystical den where sexual impropriety worked in conjunction with a white slave trade. Bernard, exhausted by the media's charges, relented and explained, "the whole scheme is physical culture, that's all."[42] Bernard's yoga school certainly entailed more than just physical culture, but in the face of vice squads, Comstock laws, and anti-Asian sentiment, alignment with physical culture provided an acceptable explanation of the practice while distancing it from its "Oriental," mystical, sexual aspects.

Despite claims that he taught Western physical culture, the media coded Bernard as "Oriental," adding another dimension to our analytical understanding of sexuality in yoga as taught by Bernard. In his most notorious trial in New York City, a city police officer told the judge, "this man is a Hindu teacher, and claims to cure people by controlling the spirits." In response to this description, the papers reported that "Magistrate Breen looked curiously at [Bernard] who is 33 years old, a little bald, and

[41] From *The Critic*, January 15, 1881 quoted in Priya Srinivasan, "The Nautch women dancers of the 1880s: Corporeality, US Orientalism, and anti-Asian immigration laws" *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 19 (1), 9.
[42] Love, *The Great Oom,* 59.

wears side whiskers - evidently an American in appearance."[43] In other reports, Bernard claimed "he is a native of India, but looks more like a dapper American."[44] In some papers the reports on Bernard's race functioned to make clear to readers that Bernard was somehow less than white, though "evidently an American in appearance" (a line that so succinctly states the issues of citizenship and race that existed at the time). That this man could be a "real" American teetered toward the unbelievable and even if his skin was white by virtue of his teachings Bernard could not possibly be an "acceptable" citizen of the United States.[45]

Moving Yoga Toward Greater Acceptability

Even though the notoriety of the trial stayed with Bernard, afterwards he continued to work in New York and New Jersey, and, with the help of his new wife, Blanche DeVries, he cultivated a new, more tasteful, restrained, and acceptable image for yoga. With DeVries's help, Bernard established eight new gender-segregated studios in 1916. By February 1919, De Vries had mastered the most advanced postures Bernard taught and ran her own institute, Yoga Gymnosophy in Manhattan. These new studios, as opposed to Bernard's earlier schools where the neighbors complained of strange

[43] "Omnipotent Oom held as kidnapper"
[44] "Healer Raided" *The Daily Star,* May 4, 1910, accessed January 23, 2013, news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1297&dat=19100504&id=hcxNAAAAIBAJ&sjid=PooDAAAAIBAJ&pg=6026,2398749
[45] By February 1911 the judge had declared a mistrial, but the damage of the trial and the media still clung to Bernard. The Tantrik Press failed, most of his followers dispersed, and financial ruin loomed. After a brief escape to New Jersey, Bernard reorganized and began a new school under an alias at 250 West Eighty-seventh Street. The new school attracted Caucasian and visiting Indian scholars with a focus on more intellectual pursuits. As this school gained momentum it once again attracted the attention of the police and the media. By the end of the year Bernard left New York City for Leonia, New Jersey, but he continued to see private clients in Manhattan. In Leonia Bernard met his future wife Blanche DeVries who would help reorganize his teaching to appeal more to higher-class women.

occurrences and "wild Oriental music and women's cries, but not those of distress," appeared more civilized and respectable.[46] According to various reports, DeVries's school had "marble staircases, brass fixtures, fine Oriental carpets, a library full of books on yoga and Indian philosophy....The studios on the upper floors were sunny and spotless."[47] Her attention to detail, her abilities as a yogi, and her youthful femininity made her a favorite among wealthy socialites, including prominent members of the Vanderbilt family, most importantly William Vanderbilt's stepdaughter, Margaret Rutherford Mills.

When Margaret Mills entered DeVries and Bernard's life, sex and power once again became the fulcrum on which their yoga rested. However, this time the combination of sex and power led to Bernard not to a jail cell, but the realization of a lifelong goal to create a space that allowed people to work toward the true foundations of society: physicality, sexuality, music, and song as expressions of joy.[48] In 1917, Margaret was an heiress trapped in an unhappy marriage to Ogden Mills and confined by stifling social codes. In a search for happiness and fulfillment, Margaret began taking lessons with DeVries. Entranced, Margaret followed Devries to a summer retreat in the

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[46] "Night Revels Held in Sanskrit College," *New York Times (1857-1922),* December 15, 1911. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/97186348?accountid=7118.

[47] Syman, *The Subtle Body*, 99 from Goodman, Eckert. "The *Guru of Nyack*: The True Story of Father India, the Omnipotent Oom," *Town & Country* (April 1941): 50, 53, 92-3, 98-100. DeVries meticulously cared for the yoga spaces she headed until her death; eventually managing twelve studios in Manhattan and the design of the Nyack country club.

[48] By 1907 Hamati had decided to return home to Calcutta and Bernard and he amicably parted ways after Bernard paid him for the intellectual rights to the Vira Sadhana. A tome that according to Bernard also held pure truths, which one would think would not be able to be owned by one individual . Finding a permanent home for Bernard's vision would prove difficult. Under scrutiny from the law, Bernard and his followers left San Francisco and headed north to Seattle, Washington. Bernard quickly gathered around sixty followers and set up five studios, before moving to New York. To read more about these particular episodes in Bernard's life see: Love, *The Great Oom*, and Syman, *The Subtle Body*.

Hamptons, New York, to study yoga more intensely. After this summer, Margaret enrolled her entire family in classes and fell in love with Bernard. In a breathless letter, Margaret confessed "I want to be all yours monkey in every way, conventionally & unconventionally in all ways conceivable & you sweet have chosen me for your own out of this foolish old world so why should we wait any longer."[49] Unaware of the relationship between Margaret and Bernard and impressed with the positive effects yoga had on her entire family, Anne Vanderbilt, Margaret's step-mother, began endorsing yoga's benefit among her wide-reaching and powerful social circle. With the Vanderbilts' backing and a growing wealthy clientele, Bernard and DeVries opened more elaborate studios with at least a $75,000 investment from Anne Vanderbilt herself.[50]

As the taint of Bernard's earlier legal troubles became a distant memory and with the support of the Vanderbilts, Bernard and DeVries focused their energies on expanding their reach, which meant Tantra became less central to their teachings. Even members of Bernard's inner circle busied themselves taking classes on "anatomy, philosophy, English literature, and Sanskrit, with lectures on Vedic philosophy and comparative religion."[51] Emphasizing character development, balanced living, and maintaining one's health through preventative measures, Bernard now urged his followers to move away from the esoteric, foreign words and practices because they had no inherent benefits. Instead, Bernard championed "household drudgery, scrubbing floors and so forth" as the path to a

[49] Letter dated November 11, 1918 in Love, *The Great Oom,*107. And Llellwyn "Cheerie" Jackson, 1990-1992, folder 1, box 20, Viola Wertheim Bernard Papers, 1918-2000, Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY).
[50] Love, *The Great Oom*, 138
[51] Ibid., 110.

stronger soul.[52] Anne Vanderbilt enlisted her youngest and most listless daughter, Barbara, in Bernard's drudgery routine, and, according to *Town & Country,* other women of prominence partook as well, "sometimes seen by milkmen and late-night revelers scrubbing down the marble front steps at the crack of dawn."[53] One of his more adoring longtime students, nicknamed Cheerie, who oversaw some of these prominent women's labor later wrote that Bernard "understood how to Westernize this ancient philosophy, making it more useful and practical"[54]

With Vanderbilts and their peers scrubbing the stairs at Bernard's studios and the press engaged with World War I, Bernard made an effort to balance his identity as an intellectual and a sexually liberated man. Hoping to stave off negative attention, Bernard joined reputable intellectual societies such as the Royal Asiatic Society; but, with the start of World War I, even the New York tabloids abandoned their coverage of Bernard, even though he continued to pursue a Tantrik practice with his inner circle. Had the war not fully occupied their reportage, they surely would have pounced on Bernard's tantalizing and sensational talks such as "Sex Perversion, Chemical and Anatomical Value," which his biographer Robert Love described as a "rambling lecture on marriage, orgasm, evolution, yoga, and oral sex." Bernard encouraged his listeners to embrace sexual expression and orgasm and ignore laws against oral sex, understanding that "if sex is right that is the whole secret."[55] Even after his legal trouble in New York City, Bernard

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[52] Ibid.,113.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Llellwyn "Cheerie" Jackson, 1990-1992, folder 1, box 20, Viola Wertheim Bernard Papers, 1918-2000, Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY).
[55] Love, *The Great Oom*, 92.

returned to his earlier desire to find a universal truth through sex. A spirit of inquiry and possibility of understanding the world through lived experiences gained more believers; "the universe itself and the psyche that confronts it, the laws of matter and density, of energy conservation and expenditure, of relative and multiple perspectives...and the only virtue was honest reportage of their operation."[56] "Honest reportage" remained central to Bernard's concern, and the few other publications about yoga at the time also "represent[ed] postural yoga as mystical and arcane but also claim to reveal a secret truth that can be experienced directly through practice."[57] Bernard positioned himself in this new cultural moment as a gatekeeper to the truths of the universe. Through his teaching, Bernard promised his students that they would have authentic experiences, which now spanned from sex to domestic drudgery and transcended their mundane understanding of the world.

In 1918, Pierre Bernard and Blanche DeVries decided that in order to better serve their wealthy clientele they should relocate to the countryside and expand their studios into a full-service retreat in Nyack, New York.[58] Buying seventy-six acres that contained two mansions and a variety of smaller residential homes, Bernard and his followers refurbished the property into the Clarkstown Country Club, whose motto read: "A place where the philosopher may dance. And the fool be provided with a thinking cap." A two-

[56] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty:Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1996), 28.
[57] Joseph Alter, "Yoga at the Fin de Siècle: Muscular Christianity with a 'Hindu'Twist," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 5 (2006), 765-768. These books did not necessarily recommend Americans practice physical yoga without a teacher, which Bernard and his followers veered away from and encouraged people to practice physical yoga.
[58] The Vanderbilts' patronage allowed them to pursue larger ventures in and around New York. By April 1918, Margaret Mills had given Bernard power of attorney over her accounts, allowing him to draw as much money as he needed to fund his projects.

hour drive north of Manhattan, the small town also had a train and bus depot, making it possible for people to visit the school with relative ease. At the time Nyack sat in the middle of "spacious, rolling countryside divided into dozens of small farms and a growing number of sprawling estates."[59] Looking back at the Club a former student remarked that:

> "There was all sorts of attractions [at the Clarkstown Country Club], the shows and the teaching of yoga – yoga was being taught here long before it became fashionable in the rest of this country, the Beatles hadn't gone or anything, and it was exciting. There were very interesting people, the circus thing was going on. The athletics, theatre that Devries was the head of, and also there was dancing lessons and acrobatic lessons and the feeling that one was in on secret things of mysteries of life by listening to lectures at night." [60]

In 1919, as Bernard moved into his final yoga home in Nyack, he began redefining his view of yoga. Bernard never fully abandoned tantra, and *asanas* always remained central to Bernard's interpretation of yoga, but as Americans' individual concerns shifted, Bernard's teachings emphasized more cerebral and less sexually explicit aspects of yoga. Even as early as 1920, Bernard argued Tantrik yoga did not solely focus on sexuality, but could be "to all men something- crumbs in most cases- 'To some men all'...The doctrine is so big, you see, that there is always some of it that you could give even to Wop, the dog, here; it is so big; there are so many sides to it." Though Bernard took an expansive view of Tantrik yoga, he did not want this view to rob yoga of all its meaning, arguing in 1924 that yoga involved more than a mere "combination of stunts," but allowed for "union of the individual with the universal," and could offer a system of management for

[59] Love *The Great Oom*, 122.
[60] 48 – Rockland County 28 July 1987 Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Sci. Library Columbia University.

"work or play." For Bernard, yoga enabled a person to practice "the art of more rapid evolution" which allowed a man to attack "all problems of life better than the other fellow."[61] This iteration of his yogic philosophy revealed that power, far more than simply sex, mattered to Bernard. As he aged and his economic fortunes improved up until the Great Depression, Bernard slowly built a new type of yoga that individuals could use to work more efficiently through economic hardships.

Edith Wharton's Mahtma at Dawnside: Representing Yoga in Twilight Sleep

Despite Bernard's move away from the open sexuality of yoga in his own teaching, his earlier reputation retained traction in popular culture. Working from earlier newspaper reports and interest in the Vanderbilt's pursuit of yoga, Edith Wharton expanded the understanding of yoga to non-practitioners in *Twilight Sleep* (1927). In what would be her final novel, Wharton satirically examined the social tensions surrounding sexuality and yoga Bernard created. As one of the preeminent social critics at the turn of the twentieth century, Wharton offers an insightful interpretation of yoga in New York, using it as a scandalous backdrop to pit old New York against the new. The characters are wealthy New Yorkers straddling two worlds, all working diligently to achieve a waking somnambulism, anesthetized to the lack of control they have over their environment.

In *Twilight Sleep*, Wharton tells the story of the Manford family, members of the New York elites who dabble in a bohemian lifestyle by following a yogi leading them

[61] Lecture notes, October 17, 1920, Outlines of Yoga, November 22, 1924, and Lecture notes June 17,1928 Harry Ransom Center, Quoted in Syman ,*The Subtle Body,* 106-110.

into a full-blown sexual scandal. For much of the novel Wharton focuses on matriarch Pauline Manford's relationship with the "Mahatma." The Mahatma is only one of many religious leaders that Pauline calls a friend and spiritual guide, but after talking to Rabbis and Priests, the Mahatma has the final word on spiritual matters for her. Early in the novel Pauline explains that the Mahatma, leader of the "Return to Purity" movement, advocates "mental deep breathing" and taught exercises meant to reduce wrinkles and hips. Pauline's blind adoration of the Mahatma begins to collapse when the New York tabloids expose the Mahatma's Dawnside retreat with the sensational headlines "Oriental Sage in Native Garb" and "Dawnside Co-Eds" accompanied by photos of "a lot of mixed nudes doing leg-work round a patio."[62] This sensational revelation compels Pauline to reflect:

> She had never seen anything of the kind herself at Dawnside - heaven forbid! - but whenever she had gone there for a lecture, or a new course of exercises, she had suspected that the bare whitewashed room, with its throned Buddha, which received her and other like-minded ladies of her age, all active, earnest and eager for self-improvement, had not let them very far into the mystery. Beyond, perhaps were other rites, other settings: why not?

Wharton suggests Pauline's advancing age and her prudishness, evidenced in her exaggerated "heaven forbid!", keeps her on the outskirts of the deeper mysteries that the Mahatma provided to the younger, more comely girls at Dawnside. In the "bare whitewashed room" she now suspects that she received a "bare whitewashed" spiritual education. The Mahatma's refusal to teach Pauline and her cohort, aged beyond sexual desirability and educated in more reserved sexual behavior, the deeper mysteries of life

[62] Edith Wharton, *Twilight Sleep*, (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1927), 106.

beyond the front room insults Pauline and derails her attempts to connect to a younger generation. At Dawnside, the deeper mysteries center on a free but contained sexuality; scant nudity appears on occasion, but overt acts of sex remain hidden from sight. Pauline continues to ponder the exact nature of the Mahatma's program:

> Wasn't everybody talking about "the return to Nature," and ridiculing the American prudery in which the minds and bodies of her generation had been swaddled? The Mahatma was one of the leaders of the new movement: The Return to Purity, he called it. He was always celebrating the nobility of the human body, and praising the ease of the loose Oriental dress compared with constricting western garb: but Pauline had supposed the draperies he advocated to be longer and less transparent.[63]

Wharton uses Pauline to demarcate the difference between views of sexuality between generations. Throughout the novel, Pauline tries to insert herself into various causes of liberation that Wharton employs to define the Jazz Age, but no matter how hard she tries, Pauline remains an interloper. Despite her dalliances, Pauline knows that she grew up swaddled in "American prudery" and views herself as a member of the older, sexually repressed, Victorian class. Even though Pauline views her generation as prudish and repressed, Wharton presses the hypocrisy of this claim by spending much of the book discussing her marriage and re-marriage and the affair her second husband carries on with his daughter-in-law, one of the young nudes cavorting at the Dawnside retreat. Furthermore, Pauline's clubwomen dither between intensely celebrating reproduction in the Mothers Club right before celebrating reproductive control in the Birth Control Committee. In these ways, Wharton explores and critiques the prevalent, sometimes contradictory discussions of sex circulating at the time.

[63] Ibid.,111.

Wharton reflects the narrative of liberation through the clothing women wear as they practice yoga. She uses confining clothing as a sartorial expression of Western prudery that swaddled, or tightly and fully covered, older generations of women. The choice of the word swaddling evokes images of binding, full-coverage, and infantilization. Clothing for women in the Victorian period hid them, constricted them and masked their bodies. In contrast to these garments, Wharton depicts the Oriental dress as loose and easy; clothing that unleashes the "nobility" of the body as it returns to a pure state of physicality. This physical freedom is sexual. The clothing that freed these young girls is short and transparent. Freedom becomes having your body unencumbered and, within the narrative of *Twilight Sleep,* this nudity is extremely sexualized.

The literal and figurative undressing that occurs in yoga and under the Mahatma's tutelage also frames nature and naturalness in terms of sexuality. Wharton creates a parallel between nature and purity through naming these movements "the return to Nature" and "the return to Purity." This connection resonated with Bernard's own desire for authenticity, experience, and view of sex as a natural practice. Where Bernard thought all of this loosening of mores would empower his students and allow them to alter their relationship to society, Wharton's fictionalized account takes a dimmer view of alternative lifestyles. The yoga retreat in *Twilight Sleep* becomes the scene of intergenerational disharmony, ultimately unveiling ugly truths about interfamily affairs. By letting sexual freedom exist as an option in a socio-cultural realm that demands a more confined level of propriety, the family buckles under the freedom and eventually re-conforms to an anesthetized existence. The effect of Wharton's novel, then, was to serve

as a continued popularization of the stereotype of the dangerous yogi who teaches ideas that were untenable in the United States at the time.

Changing yoga

Despite Wharton's dim view of the yoga retreat, Bernard's work at the Clarkstown Country Club transformed yoga, making it a more acceptably mainstream practice. Even the media had to admit that Bernard's interest in the occult and sexuality changed over the course of his career. By 1941, an essay on Bernard's life reported that he no longer held the mantle of "the mystical figure who first cast a spell over The Best People. The turban and flowing robes, with which he used to titillate their tastes for the occult, have given way to an old baseball cap and a sweat shirt. He has extended his activities to the mundane sphere with a vengeance." Despite the author's odd labeling of running a circus, raising elephants, and training prizefighters as mundane, the larger point holds that by the end of Bernard's career he expended more energy promoting sports at the Clarkstown Country Club and acting as the president of the Nyack bank than on studying and teaching yoga.[64] In a letter to his "dear Theos" Bernard related that his most pressing activities in the spring of 1936 included a bank meeting and personally putting on a baseball game.[65] He also felt the strain of managing some of his employees and wanted to start "cutting out some of these bums who are dancers" who he wanted to

[64] "Wealthy Mrs. Donovan (Now in the Asylum) and her Yogi Teacher" in *American Week* 1941 from Viola Wertheim Bernard Papers, 1918-2000, Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY). This article relates the trials and tribulations of the "White Lama" Theos Bernard. A distant relation of Bernard and only a peripheral participant at the Clarkstown Country Club.

[65] Theos Bernard earned the nickname the "white swami" after becoming the first American to travel to the Himalayas.

be "out doing something and getting money for it instead of lying around here and fostering an isolated clique which certainly is no assistance to Yoga."[66] At this point in his career, even when Bernard discussed yoga he unabashedly linked it to making money. Undeniably, Bernard was always interested in earning a living off of teaching yoga, but toward the end of his career his economic concerns became more pronounced while his spiritual and sexual concerns lessened. In another letter to Theos in the summer of 1936, Bernard briefly recounted the comings and goings of various club members, but was mainly preoccupied with the development of the club property: "Putting in eighteenhours[sic] a day at the Sports-Centre...They have invested nearly 100,000 in cash in theproperty[sic] thus far, but are not stuck for funds to complete, and due to labor union troubles and attorney general's investigation of their stock selling methods, their finances are tied up temporarily."[67] The financial troubles of his investors had him scrambling to protect the club's property, which at this point Bernard did not necessarily see as a yoga retreat. As he told Theos: "If [the sports center] stalls much longer the [racing] season will be at an end for this year, and nothing doing before next June, so we areterribly[sic] anxious."[68] Despite Bernard's anxiety over the completion of the sports center, his workers finished the track allowing him to hold eight to fourteen private dog

[66] Letter from Pierre Bernard to Theos Bernard, dated June 1, 1936, folder 13, box 9 Viola Wertheim Bernard Papers, 1918-2000, Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY).
[67] Letter from Pierre Bernard to Theos Bernard, dated August 21, 1936 folder 13, box 9 Viola Wertheim Bernard Papers, 1918-2000, Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY).

[68] Ibid.

races a night. Bernard boasted, "everybody that knows tracks in this country say that it will be the finest without exception."[69]

In two decades, by 1933, Bernard had moved away from the name Oom the Omnipotent in the *New York Times* to "director of the Clarkstown Country Club and the president of the State Bank at Pearl River." With this change, the press thought of a new nickname for the Clarkstown Country Club that made no reference to a spookery or cult: "Bernard's 'Millionaire Colony.'"[70] That this new moniker hanging in quotes in an article speaks to a different type of distinction for Bernard: the sexual excesses of the Jazz Age became less enticing to readers, but the conspicuous displays of wealth remained a point of interest. In 1933, the Great Depression reached its nadir with unemployment hovering around 25 percent; to have a playground of millionaires tucked into the bucolic town of Nyack did not fit with the circumstances of the rest of the nation. On the one hand, the new nickname suggests a continued suspicion surrounding Bernard and his students as people who had too much, when so many had too little. However, media displays of wealth did not diminish during the Great Depression. Roland Marchand argues that this uptick in depictions of the very wealthy during the Depression rose from a desire to escape: "people had never been so eager to enjoy vicarious experiences of the life of the wealthy. The movies alone proved this conclusively."[71] Furthermore Bernard may have run a "millionaire's colony" but he also shifted his focus

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[69] Ibid.
[70] "Mom, Huge Elephant Dies in 92d Year" *New York Times,* November 11, 1933, *http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/100591277/13747202BE870CB97E7/27?accountid=7118*.
[71] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 292.

to more populist pursuits with public horse racing, circuses, and, symbolically interesting, a lit baseball stadium. These pursuits beyond yoga enmeshed Bernard into the landscape of idealized mainstream Americana, which blunted the perception of yoga as an unassimilable practice.

Baseball at Night

One of the most telling artifacts that reveals shifting perceptions of Pierre Bernard came out of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) a part of the Federal Emergency Relief Act in 1934. The project hired of 3,749 artists, who produced "15,663 paintings, murals, prints, crafts and sculptures for government buildings around the country."[72] PWAP did not give the artists any specific guidelines to follow, only suggesting "the 'American scene' would be a suitable topic."[73] Russian emigre Morris Kantor painted the Clarkstown Country Club baseball diamond at night—an artificially lighted field was a novelty in 1934 and virtually non-existent at the time. By compressing the diamond, ballplayers, and the crowd together the artists suggests a community joining to share the joys of an expanding national pastime. Baseball at night both literally and metaphorically conveys the country's technological ingenuity, allowing Americans to continue to live life even in the darkness. By condensing the players and spectators into a light-filled foreground, surrounded on the edges by extreme darkness, the painting creates a picture of hope and contentment. This comforting and inspirational image meant to signify an "American scene" was possible because of Pierre Bernard's ability to generate interest in

[72] Jerry Adler, "1934: The Art of the New Deal" *Smithsonian,* June 2009, accessed January 23, 2013 http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/1934-Picturing-Hard-Times.html.
[73] Ibid.

and a sizeable income from yoga. Without his earlier yoga schools that gave him access to wealthy patrons, he would not have successfully expanded his club beyond yoga to include more mainstream American entertainment which, in addition to baseball, included boxing, wrestling, circus elephants, and the occasional illegal dog race that "cater[ed] to the Depression-era thirst for varied, affordable entertainment."[74]

Bernard's evolving interest in expanding the Clarkstown Country Club cast him ostensibly as a contradictory leader of yoga. The image of an authentic yogi lends itself to visions of ascetic monks; yet in the United States that idealized vision of the ennobled, zealous holy man rarely exists. As his one time student and distant relation Viola Werthiem Bernard explained to an interviewer in 1991:

> [Pierre Bernard] was a very strange mixture anyway in that he was a very astute businessman and became the head of a bank in Rockland County and all sorts of respectable western things along with that Eastern esoteric stuff. At the same time he liked to play baseball and all of that. He had a race track built at a sports center and got into trouble with that because it was against the law to have dog racing. [75]

All of the trappings of the Clarkstown Country Club suggests that Bernard wished to abandon yoga entirely; however, he still worked on building a tremendous library of Eastern philosophical texts, as well as teaching yoga to his interested clients, of which there were still many. By the early 1930s, Bernard, now finally less afraid of negative

[74] 1934: A New Deal for Artists exhibition label for Morris Kantor's Baseball at Night(1934) at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=12930
[75] Transcript of Viola Bernard's recollection of the Clarkstown Country Club meeting with Carol Lingahm, Theos Bernard Papers, (June 25, 1991) Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY), 2.

press, allowed one of his students to write a book explaining the yoga he had been teaching for over twenty years.

Eastern Philosophy for the Western Mind: Spreading Hatha Yoga Outside the Clarkstown Country Club

When embroiled in scandal in New York City, Bernard had carefully described yoga to the press as part of "physical culture," but now, emboldened by his successes in Nyack, he began to discuss yoga outside of his inner circle at the Clarkstown Country Club (CCC). With Bernard's blessing, Hamish McLurin, a student and "stalwart member" of the CCC, attempted to convey Bernard's "Indo-Arayan" teaching to Americans in *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds* (1933), one of the first prescriptive American interpretation of Hatha yoga. McLurin strove to appeal to a Western sensibility. One reviewer in the *Los Angeles Times* commended the work for not "being stamped all over with evidence of cultism."[76] McLaurin described yoga to readers within a framework of Western ideas about health, physical culture, and economics. As a student of Bernard's, "a promoter, an entrepreneur...a public relations guy," McLaurin adapted his teacher's understanding of how to explain yoga in a manner that would resonate with Americans.[77] In this carefully crafted promotional work, McLaurin avoided precise detail regarding the physical aspects of yoga in his text, thereby maintaining a common fear that physical yoga, if undertaken without a teacher, could do

[76] Jordan Smith-Paul "I'll be Judge You Be Jury: The Thought of India *Los Angeles Times,* July 30, 1933, "http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/hnplatimes/docview/163170180/13747A49619DBE57D4/1?accountid=7118.

[77] Rockland County 28 July 1987, folder 48, box 1Archives & Special Collections A.C. Long Health Science Library Columbia University (New York, NY).

serious damage to a person's physical and mental health; even Indian teachers viewed it as a practice suited to the lower class of fakirs.[78] However, McLaurin's text also departed from these concerns, suggesting people should practice Hatha yoga and that instructions for some basic *asanas* could come from a book rather than directly from a teacher.

While McLaurin and Bernard both declared physical yoga as a distinctly, separate practice from the broader physical culture movement, McLaurin's text illustrated the shared roots of the two categories in the movements' responses to the spread of neurasthenia. By 1900, the medical community and social critics declared physical weakness as the primary scourge of the white middle class. Physicians across the U.S. diagnosed more and more people with muscle fatigue, '"nervous exhaustion,' 'brain exhaustion' and 'spinal exhaustion,'" which largely fell into the broader category of neurasthenia. Physicians widely believed that men became neurasthenics from, as Gail Bederman describes, "the increased pace and technological advancements of modern civilization that placed greater demands on them as businessmen and professionals."[79] McLaurin recognized the powerful hold the neurasthenia "epidemic" had on middle class Americans and incorporated concerns about it into his explanation of why "Vedic thinkers" developed hatha yoga centuries before: "Sedentary occupations without number had come into being...[and] a sizable portion of mankind...was in danger of neglecting something that was vital to its general well being. It became necessary...to devise a

[78] This is a large difference between the published understanding of Hatha Yoga under Bernard and the later more explicit instructions Indra Devi provided in her books.
[79] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, *Women in Culture and Society*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 87.

system of exercise which would replace manual labor..[and] could be practiced by goldsmith, scholar, merchant or priest, and by the poor as well as by the rich."[80] In McLaurin's interpretation of yoga ancient Vedic scholars, hundreds of years before physicians in the West, understood that sedentary work depleted people's general well being. This interpretation both connected Vedic scholars to contemporary problems while also imbuing them with a deeper wisdom than contemporary physicians. McLaruin promised that yoga, undertaken properly and consistently, would result in "steadier nerves, sounder wind, stronger heart action, and more elastic veins and arteries."[81] In his view, yoga was the best and oldest response to the contemporary problem of neurasthenia that would allow a person to steady their nerves and improve all their vital organs and systems.

Though physical culture and yoga shared roots in a response to neurasthenia and physical health, the two schools differed in views on gender and the ideal body. McLaurin, and by extension Bernard, did not prescribe different types of yoga exercises for men and women in the belief that yoga anybody, regardless of their sex, could successfully execute the exercises. In contrast, the most popular cures for neurasthenia did have clearly different approaches based on gender; as a result, popular physical culture became tied to definitions of ideal, Western, white masculinity. While physicians advised women suffering from neurasthenia to undergo "rest cures," they prescribed strength building for white-middle class men "in emulation of new vigorous heroes, like

[80] Hamish McLaurin, *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds,* (Boston, MA: The Alpine Press Inc., 1933), 209-210.
[81] Ibid., 218.

Eugen Sandow and Bernarr Macfadden."[82] Sandow and Macfadden played an active role in shaping an ideal, muscular physique that signaled health, strength, manliness, and virility. Eugen Sandow, a Prussian strongman, spent the 1890s touring various theaters displaying his strength and chiseled physique in which he "presented a body that consciously combined working-class popular strength with upper-class systematized training."[83] According to John Kasson, Sandow epitomized "white, European male ideal" that reflected a statuesque Greco-Roman level of perfection that "both highlighted other men's inadequacies and, together with the photographs, exercises, books and muscle developers he sold, offered another self-help restorative for lost manhood."[84] As Sandow shaped himself into a paradigm of masculinity, Bernarr Macfadden spread the gospel of vigorous exercise and strength training in *Physical Culture* magazine, with the motto: "Weakness is a Crime." Macfadden despised unhealthiness and hoped that all Americans could achieve virility and success on the path to "health plus" which meant "vim, vigor, snap and energy. Health means clarity and strength of mind; purity and beauty of soul...He is a unit - a being - a man, whole complete, vigorous, perfect, happy - because healthy."[85] Macfadden's view of healthiness could mainly be measured by the size of a man's muscles, going so far as to claim that "the man who is looking for health, but does not want muscles, will search in vain."[86] The emphasis on muscularity became

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[82] Carolyn De La Pena, *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 27.
[83] Ibid., 68
[84] John Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 50-54.
[85] Bernarr Macfadden, *Macfadden's Encyclopedia* (n.42), 1:1-3 quoted in Whorton *Crusaders for Fitness* 302.
[86] Quoting MacFadden in Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness,* 298.

deeply tied to white masculinity at this time and while Bernard and his followers shared many of the same goals of health as Macfadden, they did not believe oversized muscles equaled healthiness. According to McLaurin, "the Vedic experimenters observed that longevity, endurance, and freedom from pain were not so much dependent upon large biceps and bulging calves as they were upon sound lungs, a strong heart, and good digestive and eliminative apparatus."[87] Here McLaurin offered a criticism and an alternative to the intense, and what McLaurin would consider, superficial physicality espoused by Sandow and Madfadden. By challenging this idealized male body, McLaurin found himself in a precarious situation, defining yoga in opposition to masculinity and fixing yoga as an effeminate practice. Perhaps surprisingly, McLaurin did not directly address issues of effeminacy and yoga. However, given Bernard's practically hyper-masculine view of himself and the associations the CCC developed with other markers of masculine athleticism, it is less surprising that he and his followers remained untroubled by questions regarding yoga and gender.

In addition to yoga, the CCC offered baseball, dog racing, horse racing, and boxing matches that worked to counteract the effeminate, cultish image that clung to yoga. Author E.B. White, in a small "investigative" essay published in the *The New Yorker*, tut-tutted to his readers that "we'd been aware, in a general way, that open-faced housewives were susceptible to Indian thought" and found a room of around two hundred "women - elderly dames with brittle faces and imperfect digestion, the sort of ladies you

[87] McLaurin, *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds*, 214.

see on the porch at Lake Mohonk."[88] These women sitting in rapt attention listening to the unnamed yogi (in whose teaching White did recognize elements of Macfadden's work) hardly looked like Macfadden's idealized women filled with vim and vigor. The tongue-in-cheek essay spoke to a larger perception of yoga as a practice for ailing, wealthy women. Yet Bernard shunned the look of the stereotypical yogi, "a saint in yellow robes seated in meditation," embodying an athletic masculinity as a "vigorous man of about 40 in a white sport sweater and wearing baseball pants, smoking a big cigar."[89] Bernard exuded masculinity and therefore never really felt a need to defend himself.

In student and boxer Lou Nova, physicality and yoga coalesced to underscore Bernard's view of yoga as a masculine practice and his desire to popularize yoga beyond the CCC. Nova began studying with Bernard in his early twenties and, by 1935, held the World Amateur Heavyweight Boxing Championship. Under Bernard's tutelage Nova perfected a "cosmic punch" which he demonstrated at the museum of science and industry in New York City with the help of "35 picture slides, two aides, a lecturers, 17 diagrams and an interpreter during his talk" to explain a physical and mental balance that, if properly executed, would knock an opponent down fairly cleanly.[90] While staying at CCC, Nova spent two hours a day learning physical yoga from Bernard, who named his star pupil "Paramahamsa", which he translated for the sports reporters that flocked to the

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[88] E.B. White, "Mammy India" *The New Yorker* March 3, 1928, 19.
[89] Love, *The Great Oom*, 97.
[90] "Lou Nova Unveils Cosmic Punch Secrets with Which He Hopes to Kayo Louis" *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* April 10, 1941, accessed January 19, 2013 http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1129&dat=19410410&id=DH1IAAAAIBAJ&sjid=NGoDAAAAIBAJ&pg=4748,4723818

club to document the curious training as "the highest type of man in the sense of physical, mental, and moral balance, poise, and equilibrium."[91] In Nova, Bernard found a man who could help demonstrate and popularize Bernard's teaching. After a successful match against Max Baer, which Nova won with a TKO (technical knockout), Nova continued to fight and practice yoga, but Bernard did not go on to teach other fighters in his "cosmic" techniques. What mattered more was that Nova, a heavyweight boxer could adapt yoga to one of the manliest sports.

Physicality and masculinity in Bernard's interpretation of yoga coincided with similar developments in India. Though Bernard had never visited India, an increasing emphasis on physical culture in both the United States and India shaped yoga's development.[92] According to Mark Singelton, Eugen Sandow's 1905 tour of Asia stood out in the minds of many Indians as a definitive moment in the development of a distinctly Indian interpretation of physical culture. Sandow's emphasis on strength and muscularity influenced Indians' physical culture practices serving as "a symbolic rebuttal of colonial degeneracy narratives."[93] In India, British colonizers maintained the colonial fantasy that in all aspects of life they were superior to Indians, particularly believing that they embodied a masculine physical power Indians lacked. In an effort to subvert these images of weakness, Indian nationalists worked to create a "timeless," distinctly Indian yoga that involved more gymnastic postures, (in addition to the already active championing of indigenous religious beliefs discussed in chapter 1). Mark Singelton

[91] Charles Cooke and Russell Maloney, "Yoga for Nova" *New Yorker*, May 13, 1939, 17.
[92] Some aspects of this will be addressed in the next chapter when I consider the lineage from which Indra Devi was taught.
[93] Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body*, 89

expertly explains that the timelessness of yoga underwent a major revision in the beginning of the twentieth century in which various princes and yogis conscientiously worked "in an atmosphere of radical experimentalism that encouraged new combinations of Eastern and Western physical culture methods, albeit naturalized as ancient Hindu knowledge."[94] We will return to this notion in Chapter 3. Rather than suggest that yoga remained unchanged over the course of history, these changes at the turn of the twentieth century reveal the effect larger global currents of physical culture and masculinity had on the development of yoga in both the East and the West.

In addition, encouraging yoga as an alternative to the strength training promoted in the physical culture movement, McLaurin also took into consideration the effect the Depression would have on potential yogis. McLaurin's book and the Clarkstown Country Club's promotional materials appeal to desires for leisure and wealth but also an effort "to empathize with, and perhaps to reflect public concerns about economizing and job insecurity and popular yearnings for compensatory satisfaction," which also informed the way people sold myriad products at the time.[95] McLaurin argued forcefully for the importance of yoga during the Great Depression: "each time that a period of economic stress upsets our usual standards of value, and abolishes all certainty as to the actual work of our material possessions, it becomes increasingly evident that the West might benefit greatly [from]...the ancient scriptures of the East."[96] Grounding yoga in economic concerns and in straightforward terms, McLaurin maintained a pragmatic approach to

[94] Ibid., 111.
[95] Marchand *Advertising the American Dream*, 288
[96] McLaurin, *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds*, ix.

yoga. That McLaurin, and by extension Bernard, believed that people could practice yoga anywhere and without any equipment reflected the economic concerns, pragmatism, and "gospel of leisure" of the period. As McLaurin explained: "the prescribed exercises, from first to last, may be performed at any time and in almost any place...a small mat...is the only equipment needed and even this may be replaced...[by] anything else which provides a padded surface on which to work."[97] Not needing access to a gymnasium or "without the use of any apparatus," such as "tennis racquets, golf sticks, or bicycles"[98] to achieve physical health, in McLaurin's opinion, could convince Americans concerned about health and economics to turn to yoga.

The economic practicality of the physical practice of yoga extended to an entire system of living, what McLaurin called "a scheme for making the most of life in the world of here and now."[99] Popular psychologists of the 1930s promoted a "gospel of leisure" which directed people to view work as secondary to enjoying the here and now. Under the constraints of a depression economy, some psychologists advised that "satisfaction and pleasure did not require money, but rather a 'wholesome' attitude toward life;" advice that the CCC attempted to embody. Furthermore, the best type of leisure included "community values and a purported nineteenth century lifestyle not the harried, urban way of life which so many people were familiar."[100] The CCC captured this idealized nineteenth century lifestyle with its sprawling acres, slow pace of life, and

[97] Ibid., 208
[98] Ibid., 208-209.
[99] Ibid., 225-226.
[100] Stephen Recken, "Fitting-In: Redefinition of Success in the 1930s," *Journal of Popular Culture* (December 1, 1993), 205-206.

bucolic setting where members could escape from the economic worries plaguing the nation. In the promotional publication "Life at the Clarkstown Country Club" secretary of the club Percival Wilcox Whittlesey, "a Connecticut Yankee and blue blood who'd served as an undercover spy during World War I, captured the pragmatic, business-minded approach the club took in the mid-1930s.[101] While the club motto remained: "A place where the philosopher may dance. And the fool be provided with a thinking cap," Whittlesey now added that it was "a place where [there was] an attempt to translate the business of living into an art." Whittlesey, like the popular psychologists suggested, promoted art and leisure above business in all aspects of life. The official motto of the CCC suggested a coming together of fun and intelligence, whereas Whittlesey's addendum suggested the CCC would enable a member to move away from a business-minded approach to living toward a more artistic and therefore more liberated life.

At the same time, Whittlesey suggested that the art of living mattered more than the business of living, he grounded the CCC's offerings in business-like and economic-minded language. Whittlesey described the many amenities available at the club, including a zoo, cabin cruiser, tennis courts, pools, and sporting events, as a "new deal," a perversion of Roosevelt's economic recovery plan when applied to the goings-on of a private country club. However, on some level the members of the CCC did believe that self-improvement would lead to an improved society. Community life in Nyack remained distinctly individualistic; even though people came together, the club catered to individuals' discrete interests and concerns. This individualism manifested itself in

[101] Love, *The Great Oom*, 140.

Bernard's teaching in terms of how one should approach the world: subjectively with a strong sense of the mind's ability to shape the environment. McLaurin explained this perspective in terms of imagination: "at all time...the outcome of one's whole life is determined by the quality, quantity, and direction of one's imagination."[102] Individualism was meant to bring "happiness," rather than enlightenment, to practitioners. Yoga offered a tool to equip a man "to face with equanimity whatever life may bring him, and for that reason is under no compulsion to withdraw from it."[103] Bernard's yogic prescription for happiness suited the denizens of his "Millionaire Colony," who even in the face of economic destitution remained financially stable and who reassured themselves that by consorting with other club members they remained engaged in the world, even if it was only the limited sphere of CCC.

This connection between economic success and yoga suggests the tension in McLaurin's text that weds the foundations of yoga to a kind of recapitulation theory that American psychologist G. Stanley Hall popularized in his text *Adolescence (1904)*. Hall suggested a Darwinian and racialized understanding of childhood development, in which he argues all children undergo the same stages of development as a civilization. According to Bederman, "for [Hall] the key to understanding child nature was to recognize that children grew up repeating the actual psychological experiences of their primitive adult ancestors." However, a person's particular racial stock determined what level of civilization they could achieve. White Europeans who had purer racial lineages would reach higher levels of development more easily than the white "mongrel"

[102] McLaurin, *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds*, 226.
[103] Ibid., 229.

American children, while "the lower races simply did not have the white races' advanced final stages," truncating their adolescence and emerging into adulthood at an immutable disadvantage to their white peers. In a similar vein to Hall, McLaurin argues that when developing yoga, "the Arayans observed, however, that there is a wider gap between the calibre of thinking displayed by the highest and lowest types of human beings than there is between the thinking power of the lowest human types and that of the highest types of animals." In case he wasn't entirely clear McLaurin reasserts: "the most advanced specimens of the human family are so far superior to the most primitive specimens that they might as well belong to a different species altogether."[104] This level of racialized elitism marked a distinct departure from depictions of Bernard in his early career in New York. McLaurin established Bernard and his followers because of their innate qualities, their yoga practice and their economic successes as "the most advanced specimens." No longer sexual deviants, Bernard and his students took their place firmly among the elite and, by doing so, started to change public opinion about yoga.

The Clarkstown Country Club retained its popularity even as the Depression wore on, attracting celebrities from Broadway and Hollywood. Celebrity proved a powerful endorsement for the acceptability of yoga and refocused the club's efforts toward more theatrical productions, making the club an epicenter for theater in Nyack. Despite the celebrity clientele, membership began to dwindle as the Depression continued, along with the financial support necessary to run the club. Further rationing limited individuals' ability to travel to the club, and Bernard watched as his health and fortunes at the club

[104] Ibid., 224.

declined. Bernard died in 1955 and the following year his wife, Blanche DeVries, sold the property. Even before Bernard's death, the epicenter of yoga had shifted to California after the end of World War II, when Indra Devi arrived in the United States.

Over the course of Bernard's career, he helped reposition yoga from the mystical, sexually deviant practice that marked both his early teachings and the teachings of Katherine Tingely toward a more respectable, practical yoga at the Clarkstown Country Club. Part of that shift lay in the reduced emphasis on nontraditional sexual arrangements and the respectability that money and society could buy for yoga. The important transformation that occurred over the course of Bernard's career was that yoga lost some of its abstract mysticism and "Oriental" danger. As he attracted more wealthy clients and used Macfadden's work to support his own claims about the importance of the body and sexuality, Bernard reframed yoga as part of an American ideology focused on self-discovery and self-improvement. Even as he faced the financial challenges of the Great Depression, Bernard moved his teachings from the more free-wheeling Jazz Age towards an emphasis on increasing personal effectiveness and productivity. Bernard's ability to adapt his teachings over the course of his lifetime altered the popular dialogue about yoga.

Chapter Three: Yoga For Americans*: Indra Devi's Domesticating an 'Authentic' Yoga Practice*

As a young girl in Moscow, Eugenie Peterson (1899-2002), the daughter of a Swiss bank director and Russian noblewoman, sat in her grandparents library reading Rabindranath Tagore's 1913 Nobel Prize winning collection of poetry, *Gitanjali*. The eponymous poem in the collection reflects the reoccurring theme of abandoning materialism in favor of spiritual or natural connections. Tagore urges parents to allow their children to cast off unnecessary and suffocating wealth and explore the world:

> The child who is decked with prince's robes and who has jeweled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play; his dress hampers him at every step./ In fear that it may be frayed, or stained with dust he keeps himself from the world, and is afraid even to move./Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life.[1]

To the young Peterson, these words promised freedom and adventure away from the comfortable trappings of Moscow society. Like many other readers, she felt the pull of a powerful alternative life suggested by Tagore—a more spiritual, romantic, and ultimately more authentic life. Years later, Peterson recalled how Tagore's poem initially inspired her to travel to India, echoing William B. Yeats's sentiment that Tagore's words "display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the

[1] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings, A collection of prose translations made by the author from the original Bengali. With an introduction by W.B. Yeats to William Rothenstein,* last accessed November 19, 2012, http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/tagore/gitnjali.htm.

rushes."[2] For both Peterson and Yeats, Tagore's India offered a supremely spiritual culture that emerged from a humble and relatively meager material existence, making religion an organic part of the country's landscape. However, Peterson, still too young to travel abroad alone, continued to live in Moscow and attend drama school where through acting she explored diverse roles providing her brief escapes from reality. As a young teenager, a friend read her a Russian translation of the *Fourteen Lessons in Yoga Philosophy and Oriental Occultism*, once again piquing Peterson's interest in India. The reading "carried [her] into another world, completely new and yet strangely familiar," moving her to cry out, "I must go to India!"[3] Eventually, Peterson had the chance to cast off her "jeweled chains" and travel the world, but throughout her life she relied on social, if not always economic, privilege when she needed it.

As an adult, Peterson changed her name to Indra Devi and became one of the most important female yoga instructors in the world. Instrumental in popularizing yoga in the United States after World War II, Devi's teachings domesticated and feminized the practice, altering the way Americans viewed yoga in the United States. Following Devi's success and the work of other Western popularizers of yoga, one *New York Times* reporter deemed it a full-blown "physical fitness fad" by 1964. [4] Between her childhood in Russia and her later career teaching Hollywood stars yoga and authoring best-selling

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[2] Tagore, *Gitanjali.*
[3] Indra Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1953), 3. Nataliya Klevalina, "A portrait of the First Lady of Yoga," *Russia & India Report*, November 22, 2010, accessed January 22, 2013, http://indrus.in/articles/2010/11/22/first_lady_of_yoga04910.html.
[4] Marilyn Bender, "Yoga Inspires Maker of Casual Styles," *New York Times (1923-Current File),* May 2, 1964. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/115778539?accountid=7118, 17.

yoga books, Devi traveled the world during the tumultuous early years of the twentieth century. During her formative years, she was thrust under the influence of major historical transitions. Devi was a teenager in Moscow during the Soviet Revolution; in her late twenties she lived among the British elite in India during a time of indigenous resistance to colonial rule; in her early forties she found herself teaching yoga to Madame Chiang Kai-shek during the Japanese occupation of China; and in her late forties she became *the* yoga instructor to Hollywood's elite during the Cold War. The mechanism Devi used to negotiate these politically volatile environments shaped the nature of the yoga she would eventually teach in the United States. Devi claimed that she successfully navigated this turbulent world because of yoga, and, while true to an extent, her economic status and social connections made it possible for her to reach a level of society that shielded her from the worst horrors of her lifetime, as well as give her access to certain people crucial in supporting her yoga teaching. Devi's privilege, which she wished to eagerly cast off as a teenager, enabled her to lead a successful and largely independent life. By the time Devi arrived in the United States in 1947, she had translated the independence she gained through yoga into a practice that ultimately promoted conservative ideals about white middle-class womanhood in the United States. In an age of heightened anti-communism during the Cold War, this Russian-born, and therefore potentially threatening, transnational figure reframed yoga as a feminine practice of self-improvement and self-fulfillment.

This chapter will analyze Indra Devi's pivotal role in transforming the status of yoga in Cold War America. Her early life establishes some of the main concerns that she

would adapt into her yoga practice that she later brought to the United States. By considering her formative years one can see Devi as a cosmopolitan figure whose privilege gave her access to India in unusual ways, including being taught by Krishnamacharya. After her learning yoga in India, Devi moved to America hoping to expand Americans' understanding of yoga in terms they would understand. Through her private studio and her popular writing Devi positioned herself within popular prescriptive literature that emphasized a reliance on experts, individual effort, and careful consumerism. Additionally, she connected American sociopolitical conditions and yoga, allowing her to position yoga not as an ancient, irrelevant practice, but as a potential solution to contemporary social ills.

Becoming Indra Devi

As the Russian Civil War (1917-1923) intensified, Eugenie Peterson and her mother, anticipating the economic and social upheaval in the offing, left Soviet Russia in 1920 and settled in Berlin, Germany, in 1921.[5] Though Peterson did not practice yoga in Europe, her experiences in theater and a flirtation with Theosophy while traveling the continent would later influence her interpretation of yoga decades later. As a novice dancer, Peterson joined Yascha Yushny's Russian Theatre in Berlin and toured with his revue "The Bluebird" in Europe for six years. Yushny positioned the revue as a fun, light-hearted, entertainment that also appealed to sophisticated audiences. Billing his revue as a production for "discriminating audiences," Yushny described the show as a

[5] As members of the upper echelons of Tsarist Russia and her father's ties to Switzerland, the family thought they would be better served leaving the unstable new Soviet Union.

"rare, exotic, stimulating super-cocktail of song, dance, musical comedy, and romantic tableaux, bubbling with robust fun, charged with light gayety, spiced with nostalgic flavors of old Imperial Russia...served with a dash of continental sophistication...and the haunting melodies of Russian music."[6] By performing Russian folk music steeped in the "nostalgic flavors of old Imperial Russia," Yushny's revue rejected contemporary Soviet ideals of class and gender equality, instead idealizing a paradigm of womanhood on the stage that emphasized grace, a beautiful voice and body, delicateness, classiness, and demure behavior, all values Peterson eventually incorporated into her yoga teachings during the 1950s and early 1960s. The six years Peterson spent with the theater eventually led her to a career as a yoga teacher and influenced the style of yoga she taught in the U.S. Dancing in Europe facilitated entry into the world of traditional Indian dance in India, and dancing also led to film roles, which led to an advantageous marriage to a politically powerful European husband, which in turn gave her access to some of the most important Indian yoga teachers of the time. The language of femininity, grace, and beauty Peterson developed on the stage became a part of the yoga she framed for an American audience.

The gender and class ideals Peterson acted out in Yushny's revue informed her view of the world, but her spiritual development in Europe had a more immediate effect

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[6] The show was described as this in later versions of the touring U.S. revue: Hurock Musical Bureau, "Yahscha Yushny's Russian Revue: The Bluebird" (New York: Superior Printing Co., 1931), accessed January 22, 2013
http:// docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:k97wzXVyQVsJ:sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/traveling-culture/chau1/pdf/blue/1/
brochure.pdf+yushny's+russian+theater&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESh1uMXr13LRGUYGtLHDg5lM0NZuAV3zm310NV06MB-7BLk KO91Y0Y2zwBiu2b-qIGDrJaeyGwVkHK5UqL5ALHSAgl6AlqeHC0Znu3Xl4NBEUHspkmu6oV2eH1Q8hSm5QwwSNP0y&sig=AHI EtbTUxlS1aqJnidT0HtZ775PX2B1b7Q.

on her journey toward her discovery of yoga and framing the practice in individualistic terms. A Theosophical Society retreat held at an estate in Ommen, Holland, reminded her of her youthful desire to go to India: "She heard Krishnamurti singing holy hymns in Sanskrit" and "[she] had this feeling that [she] was hearing a long forgotten call, familiar but distant. This was a turning point for [her], the week [she] spent in the camp changed [her] life."[7] Even though Peterson viewed Theosophy skeptically, she trusted Krishnamurti, the keynote speaker of the event, because as an Indian man she attached a level of authenticity to his words that she, at least in hindsight, did not find in Western leaders of the Theosophical movement. The content of Krishnamurti's talks at Ommen largely addressed finding happiness and "Truth" through individual effort. At the retreat he told followers, "Of your own strength, of your own desire, of your own greatness, must you create this greatness which is ever-lasting. Of your own perfection, of your own genius, must you create this immortality."[8] When Krishnamurti promised happiness, "Truth," and the potential for perfection that resided in each person, he indicated a path toward spiritual enlightenment that could be found in individual actions. This individualism became a main point in Peterson's teaching in the 1950s, when she urged students to focus on the self as a way to unleash an inner power that could have positive consequences in the larger world. More immediately, the Theosophical Society retreat convinced Peterson that she must go to India as soon as possible since, as she puts it

[7] Quoted in Klevalina, "A Portrait of the First Lady of Yoga."
[8] Krishnamurti, "Ommen Campfire Talks 2," *Krishnamurti Early Writings* (Ommen, Holland: 1926), accessed January, 22, 2013 http://www.kinfonet.org/krishnamurti/excerpts/8/parts?page=3.

"without realizing it then, I had made the first step on the path toward Yoga, with Krishnamurti as my teacher and guide."[9]

Traveling through India: Peterson "accepted as a regular member of the household"

Peterson's nascent attitudes about femininity and individualized spirituality began in Europe, but upon arriving in India in 1927 these underdeveloped interests led her toward yoga, a journey that highlighted her privileged position in a colonial society in the midst of social upheaval. Peterson's place in Indian society reveals her access to colonial power and how that power offered her access to yoga instruction.[10] When Peterson moved to India, she entered a country where the anti-colonialist movement was rapidly expanding. Gandhi had amassed a large number of followers challenging British rule, and, having already executed a successful campaign of non-cooperation against the British, was leading a growing nationalist movement toward Indian independence. Despite these cultural movements, Peterson essentially ignores the changing political landscape of India, remaining silent on the subject of Indian nationalism in her later recollections. Even though she found herself spending time dancing at various Theosophical Lodges, places that had traditionally offered wide-ranging support for Indian home-rule (see chapter one), Peterson largely aligned herself with the British elite and their allies, including maharajas. Unwilling to give up the power they had held with

[9] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 5
[10] 1927 was the first time Eugenie Peterson visited India. Following this visit she would spend time living in Europe and in India, but between 1927 and 1938 Peterson would consider India her primary residence.

British approval since the mid-19th century, the princely states run by the maharajas generally did not support the Indian nationalist movement. Peterson's denial of the upheaval in Indian society was likely influenced by her close relationships with maharajas and nawabs largely resistant to the political changes happening around them.

While the political unrest did not play a large role in how Peterson characterized her life, the cultural differences between Europe and India deeply resonated with her, and her recollections of those differences reveal the privilege inscribed on her body. After initially arriving in India she "found Indian customs and habits strange: wearing a sari, sitting on the floor, bathing the way Indians bathed, and eating with your right hand."[11] Despite the foreignness of everyday practices, she fell in love with the country. As she traveled she claimed to make "friends with everyone [she] met, coolie or prince."[12] While she made her way across the country she made a point to stay in Indian homes, leading her to claim that she "came to know [India] much better than most people who had lived there for years, confined to the splendid isolation of their homes, clubs and offices."[13] When Peterson described herself as not merely a tourist, but as a full participant in daily Indian life, she positioned herself as a more informed, and thus more egalitarian, foreigner than the British elite; however, by claiming that after four months she had acquired a deep understanding of a vast country with large, geographically distinct cultures, Peterson reenacted a colonial mindset of power gained through knowledge and mastery.

[11] Quoted in Klevalina, "A portrait of the First Lady of Yoga."
[12] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 6.
[13] Ibid., 7.

In her writings, Peterson portrays India as a neatly divided society, a classification that reinforced colonial ideas about India even as she tried to place herself outside of that dynamic. Peterson's chronicles of the rigid cultural differences between India and the West reflect the much later observation made by scholar Lisa Lowe that "the British representations of India and Indians establish as British the position of narrative agency or subjectivity; the Indian people, landscapes, and images occupy the position of *objects brought into focus* by the British subject's point of view."[14] Peterson's often self-congratulatory tone about her willingness to visit and socialize with non-Anglo Indians outside of the European social clubs exposed a failed attempt to align herself with "regular" Indians and shed her privilege as a white woman. Despite her best rhetorical efforts to "pass" as Indian, her perspective and access to India at large cannot be separated from her point of privilege. As historian Peter van der Veer has argued, "it is the imperial fantasy of disguise that affords crucial knowledge of the natives and their ways of thinking without ever losing sight of the Great Game."[15] This imperial fantasy masked the reality that colonized Indians and colonial British constantly interacted with one another, resulting in unavoidable exchanges of ideas and influence. Counter to Peterson's conception, no stark distinctions existed, and efforts to create such distinctions functioned to create an imbalanced power structure. When Devi denied the cross-cultural flow of ideas and influence, she reinforced a colonial mindset, in the process

[14] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalism*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 110.
[15] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge,1995), 94.

undermining her efforts to position herself as a woman with a special ability to bridge these otherwise unbridgeable differences.

Beyond the underlying colonial discourse reinforced in Peterson's narrative, her omission of Indian nationalist activity in her extensive travels throughout the country reveals the influence of economic hierarchies on her encounters with Indians. Although she stayed in Indian homes, these were the homes of educated, literate Indian families who were willing and able to accommodate a guest. Thus, the types of homes she stayed in, while not necessarily part of the ruling elite, on some level benefitted from colonial rule, making them less likely to challenge political inequality. Furthermore, Peterson's experiences in these homes reasserted her dominance through mastery of indigenous culture. She repeatedly claimed, "after a day or so…[I would] be accepted as a regular member of the household."[16] Peterson intended these examples of accelerated acceptance by Indians to mean that she "naturally" belonged to Indian society, but in actuality they highlighted the colonizer's ability to quickly master the way of life of the colonized. Peterson's "more advanced" Western background supposedly enabled her to understand and adapt to a culture in a matter of days. Furthermore, Peterson notes that her hosts "all enjoyed the fact that I, as a foreigner, was living the way they did and especially appreciated the fact that I approved of their cooking."[17] Here, Peterson implicates her hosts in a colonial mind-set, wherein the Indians she met sought the approval of Westerners to legitimize their customs. Peterson certainly experienced "Indian customs,"

[16] Indra Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 7.
[17] Ibid.

but her status as a white Westerner meant that she only dabbled in these customs, rather than immersed herself in their practices.

Peterson's decision to wear a sari aligned her with colonial privilege and elite Indian women, not with Indian nationalists, or, as she would have suggested, "common" Indians. When Peterson began wearing saris, Gandhian nationalists were in the process of encouraging Indian women to cast them off as part of the "the khadi movement." The All-India Spinners Association called for all Indians to wear "coarse, simple, usually white, cloth" to signify a united Indian uniform that eradicated the differences of caste, region, and religion that more varied clothing signified. The association found it difficult to convince wealthier Indian women to discard their saris; as historians Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf explain, "many elite women were loath to give up shimmering silk saris that defined their high status in favour of rough white cloth previously associated with prostitutes, widows, and the impoverished."[18] When Peterson donned a sari she viewed it as a liberating alternative to more constricting Western clothing; however, despite her intentions, the sari remained inscribed with the romance of the elite Indian woman contained within the hierarchical structure of the British Raj. Peterson's personal sartorial preferences complemented her vocational choices in India, which, like the sari, reinforced her power as a colonizer.

Peterson's work as a performer continued during her travels in India, but she exchanged reenactments of Tsarist Russia for Indian folk dances and a successful career in India's burgeoning film industry, later known as Bollywood. After she arrived in India

[18] Barbara D. Metcalf & Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 183.

with a mind to make it her permanent home, she began taking traditional Indian dance lessons with the famous dancer Enakshi Rama Rao and, through this association, performed ritualistic dances at the Bombay Theosophical Lodge in 1930. Her dancing attracted the attention of movie director Bhagwati Prasad Mishra, who was working on a large production of *Sher-e-Arab* (Arabian Knight) and looking for a female lead to play against burgeoning star Prithviraj Kapoor. As a trained actor and dancer, Peterson could do the work, but Mishra ultimately decided to cast her in the role because the more conservative attitudes in Indian society that frowned upon an Indian woman appearing in a film did not apply to Peterson as a foreigner. In general, elite Indians thought only uneducated and lower caste individuals should appear in films; with *Sher-e-Arab*, Mishra hoped to break that traditional view. A huge commercial success, the film premiered in January 1930 and propelled Peterson into full-fledged Indian stardom.

Peterson's performances of traditional Indian dances, acting in an Indian film, and choosing to wear saris all signaled her desire to shed her Western ties in order to fully immerse herself in what she called "my India." [19] She magnified this transformation by adopting the name Indra Devi, which roughly translates to "beautiful goddess." At this point in her life Devi began actively distancing herself from her Russian imperial past by moving toward a fantastical, spiritual identity, signified by her hyper-feminine Indian name. Devi's obsession with India and becoming Indian blinded her to the colonial power structure that afforded her the privilege to try on an Indian identity and claim India as hers. Moreover, Devi's vision and articulation of "Indianness" largely played on

[19] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 6.

colonial fantasies of the beautiful, sari-wearing, dancer naturally imbued with a cosmic spirituality. Devi ascribed to a belief that there were ancient and timeless truths about the universe embedded in Indian soil, and that these truths were also deeply implanted in her very being. Recalling the words of Krishnamutri at the Theosphical meeting in Holland, India "came to [her] like a forgotten call, familiar yet distant, a recaptured vision from a dim past."[20] Through her early travels in India, Devi unwittingly invested herself in a timeless and idealized India that she assumed she had a right to access and appropriate.

Devi's appropriation of Indian culture at this juncture illustrated an intersection of colonial discourse and heterosexual displays of femininity that would inform her interpretations of yoga for Americans later in her career. Various scholars in a variety of historical and social contexts have written about "racial masquerading," a practice in which Devi participated that relies entirely on the display of the female body within a matrix of colonial desire.[21] Devi made herself available to the "male gaze" throughout her career as an actress, but the tense colonial relationship between Europeans and Indians at the time added a racial dimension to her performances. When Devi acted out idealized, traditional views of elite Indian womanhood, she lent credibility to male colonial desire for the "other." In contrast with the idealized, pure and chaste *memsahib*, an honorific title applied to Anglo-Saxon women, Devi offered a safe transgression: a

[20] Ibid., 5.
[21] For interesting discussions on racial masquerades and their implications see: Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1993)Philip DeLoria,*Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) and Sunaina Maira, "Belly Dancing: Arab-Face, Orientalist Feminism, and U.S. Empire," *American Quarterly* 60.2 (June 2008), 317 - 345.

white woman masquerading as a timeless, upper-class Indian beauty, accessible and acceptable to male desires.

Devi's stardom and desirability introduced her to her first husband, Jan Strakaty, a commercial attaché to the Czechoslovakian Consulate in Bombay who was invested in the business of empire.[22] Devi's marriage to Strakaty marked a further enmeshment in colonial life; it was the start of, as she said, "a life crowded with engagements, parties, balls and outings" that Devi found unfulfilling. [23] Given Strakaty's position, he and Devi would have belonged to at least one of the European social clubs in Bombay. These clubs had emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and "function[ed] to reproduce the comfort and familiarity of 'home' for Europeans living in an alien land."[24] They were also places where much of the colonial commercial business took place. The clubs established a barrier to protect limited definitions of European propriety and civility, which contrasted with the perceived strangeness of Indian culture surrounding the members. By the 1930s, "acceptable" Indians had been admitted to the previously all-white clubs, but the clubs remained within the control of Anglo-Indian elites. The parties and socialization central to club life in the 1930s stood in stark contrast to the global economic crisis destabilizing the world. In India, the economic crisis resulted in a newly

[22] Constance Jones and James D. Ryan, "Devi, Indra," *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Infobase Publishing, February 2007). Virginia Lee, "Indra Devi the First Lady of Yoga," *Yoga Journal*, January 1984. Douglas Martin, "Indra Devi, 102, Dies; Taught Yoga to Stars and Leaders," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2002, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/92270721?accountid=7118.
[23] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy,* 9
[24] Mrinalini Sinha "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Sphere," in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 184.

invigorated nationalist agitation that had been percolating since 1922.[25] The new political movement, most vividly captured in Gandhi's Salt March in 1930 and his hunger strike in prison in 1932, did not seem to penetrate the club walls, where the British required its officials to maintain membership in order to help shape Anglo-Indian public opinion.[26]

The European social clubs, according to Mrinalini Sinha, played a central role "constructing and maintaining the boundaries of a particular representation of whiteness" that was also gendered.[27] Devi states the issue more plainly by observing that her colonial peers felt association with "Indians of all castes and ranks... was very much against the unwritten but rigid law laid down by the white men in India."[28] Even as Indians gained more political power in the 1930s, social clubs that admitted Indians remained internally segregated and Anglos often openly ostracized indigenous Indian members. Furthermore, women, or more accurately wives, who attended the clubs were given a separate ladies annex, which many of the clubs barred Indian women from attending. The social strictures of colonial life in the clubs stand in stark contrast to the freedom Devi had enjoyed prior to her marriage.

In an effort to reclaim her independence, Devi turned to mystical and spiritual pursuits and dabbled in yogic healing, which initiated a major turning point in her life in the mid-1930s. In *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, Devi painted a wonderfully dramatic

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[25] Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy 2nd edition*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 120.
[26] Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Sphere," 190.
[27] Ibid., 192.
[28] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 9.

retelling of how, without any training she made a well-meaning attempt to use yoga to heal an ill friend; the friend was cured, but Devi also developed a debilitating heart condition. The beginning of this sensational story lead readers to believe that Devi did indeed have "natural" healing powers, even though she could not control them. After four years of suffering from the heart condition and endless attempts to find a cure, she met a man referred to only as Mr. Rypka, while living with her husband in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Rypka, a medical student and yoga practitioner, offered to help cure Devi's heart condition, and after five treatments, "a crackle of electricity" from his hands cured her.[29] She believed Rypka's abilities stemmed from his yoga practice, not his medical education. More than anything else, the story illustrated Devi's faith in the immense power of yoga. By portraying yoga as a practice of such magnitude that it could harm and cure a person, Devi granted yoga a terrifying, but dangerously appealing, power. Furthermore, she believed that because of this power one *needed* a reputable teacher to explain proper yogic techniques in order to prevent harm. Thus, in a story of a brush with death, Devi moved herself out of the background of the European social clubs and into the foreground of the yoga community in India and the United States as a cosmically powerful woman destined to learn how to harness the power of yoga.

Devi utilized the belief that yoga could cure, as well as potentially harm, people to bolster yoga's importance in her readers' minds, however, she was careful not to go too far in her claims of yoga's power in her early writing, waiting to incorporate more mysticism until the late 1960s when it had greater currency in mainstream America. In

[29] Ibid., 14.

her early writing, Devi recognized the negative connotations of the occult in any discussion of yoga's less physical aspects. In the foreword of her first book *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, Devi specifically stated that yoga "is in no way related to fortune-telling, palmistry, spirit-dabbling and other such things intended to primarily to attract wealthy and frustrated dowagers."[30] Here Devi implicitly acknowledged the kinds of yoga Tingley and Bernard had been teaching in the United States prior to her arrival there. She warned Americans "there are a number of unscrupulous adventurers and charlatans in [America] who mystify and exploit the gullible public under the cloak of Yoga."[31] By setting out these warnings in her foreword, Devi separated herself from previous practitioners of yoga in the United States, beginning a crucial turn in Americans' understanding of yoga that would continue to evolve over the second half of the twentieth century. Devi's evolved view of yoga from a mystical, powerful practice to one more focused on physical and mental health began with her official yoga training under Tirumalai Krishnamacharya.

Learning from Krishnamacharya

Following Devi's near-disastrous, amateur attempt at yoga, and the consequent 'miraculous' healing via yoga, she chose to learn yoga properly in India.[32] Her

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[31] Ibid.

[32] As mentioned earlier, Devi traveled between India and Europe fairly frequently and at this point in time she was moving back and forth. After her sessions with Ryka she returned to India, where her friend Princess Bhuban of Nepal suggested Devi talk to her brother Prince Mussoorie who had been practicing yoga. On his recommendation Devi began taking lessons at the women's school at the Kaivalyaghama Yogic Health Center in Bombay, which focused on improving physical health not on an learning an entire system of yoga in the name of discipleship. In the class Devi learned basic postures, which she found challenging due to an overall stiffness. Devi only attended classes at the center briefly before her husband's work brought them back to Europe.

opportunity came after the Crown Prince of Mysore, Jayachamaraja Wodiyar, invited her to his wedding. Devi eagerly wanted to go to Mysore because of its yoga schools, which the prince's father, Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodiyar IV, established in 1933 in the Jaganmohan Palace. The Maharaja, an early and vocal advocate of "indigenous physical culture," sought to "popularize Indian exercise and games throughout the state."[33] Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodiyar wanted yoga to bolster Indian traditions and serve to resist the encroachment of the physical culture promoted in YMCAs around India that served as another imposition of British superiority over the colonized Indians. Participating in the physical movement craze through indigenous physical exercise (discussed in more detail in the previous chapter) gave Indians a tool to combat negative stereotypes of effeminacy and weakness imposed upon them by the British. Even as Indians combated these stereotypes, they still needed to define themselves in terms that the British would respect, in this case concerning physical strength.

Colonial discourse shaped how colonizer and colonized viewed physical culture, heightening sensitivity to western charges of the effeminacy of yoga. Prior to British colonization, Westerners had gendered India, and the East more broadly, as feminine. In Western philosophical thought "Hinduism lacked masculine, world-ordering rationality. Hindus were guided by feminine fantasies and imagination rather than by masculine reason according to Hegel."[34] Peter van der Veer has argued that the policing of sexuality by Britain in colonial India throughout the nineteenth century manifested itself

[33] Singleton, *Yoga Body,* 178-179.
[34] Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 95.

in the masculinization of leisure, education, and religion. The British embraced a muscular Christianity enacted by "Christian heroes of the missionary movement and of military actions" in the British Empire; schools, YMCAs, and the Boy Scouts reenacted these standards in their beliefs and actions. Muscular Christianity combined with colonial dominance situated most indigenous Indians as a feminized, Hindi colonial subject.[35] In order to combat this stereotype, Wodiyar hired Tirumalai Krishnamacharya to head the palace's yoga school in an effort to run a vigorous program promoting a more athletic type of yoga.

Though Wodiyar tried to combat the image of India and its practices as effete, according to Mark Singleton, "Krishnamacharya's *yogasala* was considered distinctly *démodé."* Singleton notes, *"*it was fashionable among Mysore youth to attend K.V. Iyer's gymnasium a little farther along the palace corridor….[one of Krishnamacharya's students] recalls being made fun of by a friend who was a bodybuilding student there: yoga was for weaklings, a feminizing force."[36] The gendering of yoga in Mysore intertwined with the gender politics of colonization. Western ideals of masculinity that relied on obvious displays of strength informed the bodybuilding efforts taking place at the Mysore Palace and the YMCA. To challenge the stigma of feminization, Wodiyar sent Krishnamacharya on tours with his students to perform displays of strength.

Prior to arriving in Mysore, Indra Devi had watched one of the demonstrations given by Krishnamacharya and his students. Krishnamacharya called these

[35] As van der Veer explains because of a variety of histories, Muslims, Sikhs, Rajputs, Gurkhas and Pathans were all sufficiently masculine in the eyes of British colonizers to avoid the stigmatization of femininity. van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters,* 95-96.
[36] Singleton, *Yoga Body*, 191.

demonstrations "propaganda trips" that he hoped would expose a wider audience, including Westerners, to yoga. At the demonstration Devi attended, Western doctors examined Krishnamacharya as he stopped his heart for several minutes, astonishing the audience. Devi coolly responded to the physician's astonishment by asking them why, if they found the exercises to be so amazing, do so few people take yoga seriously: "Is it because we Westerners think it beneath our dignity to acknowledge our ignorance of certain physical laws unknown to us, and therefore prefer to dismiss the Indian teachings as fantastic and obscure?"[37] This confrontational question was consistent with Devi's desire to distance herself from, what she perceived as a narrow-minded and condescending, attitudes Westerners had about India.

No evidence suggests that Devi's interest in yoga stemmed from anything other than a genuine religious sentiment; however, her ability to learn yoga hinged on her privileged position as a white woman in colonial India, where her "material and representational power over real Asian women and men" gave her access to Tirumalai Krishnamacharya when she would have otherwise been barred from learning under him.[38] In *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, Devi claimed that her earnest drive earned her a place as one of Krishnamacharya's students, however, the economic and political pressure from the Prince of Mysore played a more crucial role in securing Devi's position. Prior to Devi's admittance to the school, Krishnamacharya had only admitted Indian men; his students largely came from royal families and elite Indians. While

[37] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 17-18.
[38] Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 79.

Krishnamacharya had great autonomy within the school, he did not run it independently, so ultimately enrollment decisions rested with the royal family.

Krishnamacharya resisted admitting Devi because she was a foreigner and a woman. This resistance stemmed from two fundamental issues about the nature of the school: one, yoga was part of a nation-building project, and two, it already retained a stigma of feminization in comparison to other physical culture projects in Mysore. On one level, Krishnamacharya viewed Devi's position as a foreigner and member of the colonial elite as an attempt to insert colonial authority into Indian culture. On another level, letting a woman attend the school would only reaffirm the view that yoga was not as masculine as other physical culture. Devi's presence as a student potentially undermined the political motivations for the very founding of Krishnamacharya's school.

Despite his reservations, Krishnamacharya relented and admitted Devi to the school because, according to Devi, he assumed the various deprivations and a stringent practice he expected of her would quickly lead her to quit. Devi presented the body under Krishnamacharya's instruction as an object to be "puritanically punished in matters of diet and exercise...[and] guiltily denied particular foods in aid of the 'salvation' of a longer life."[39] When Devi arrived at the school he instructed her to stop eating meat, white sugar, flour, rice, preserves and root vegetables. Without the aid of caffeine, Krishnamacharya had her commit to a schedule that included waking up before dawn and doing manual labor at the school. As the only woman attending the school, she took classes with men; initially, Krishnamacharya's only special advice to her was to keep up.

[39] Sarah Coakley "Introduction: Religion and the Body" in Sarah Coakley ed., *Religion and the Body, (*Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 7.

Devi surprised Krishnamacharya and dutifully went about her assignments without complaint. Looking back on her experience with Krishnamacharya, Devi laughed that he "could work miracles, such as stop his heart and turn the lights on and off at a distance. But he could not get rid of me."[40] Despite the intentionally harrowing gauntlet Krishnamacharya threw down, Devi spoke of the experience years later not as a difficult trial, but as a transition into her new life as a yogi.

Devi portrayed her easy acceptance of a yogic lifestyle as exceptional: while others experienced deprivation and struggle, she adapted with little effort. On closer inspection, the ease in which Devi became a yogi reveals differences in contemporary attitudes about deprivation in religious practices. Devi transitioned from a Western, Puritanical view in which deprivation equaled punishment to Hindu influenced view in which deprivation constituted an important part of the purification process leading to spiritual enlightenment. For example, traditional views of food in Hindu texts link individual health to specific foods, whereas the Judeo-Christian tradition generally identifies foods to avoid, rather than foods to eat. In Hindu texts, according to religious scholar Wendy Doniger, "bad food [is presented] as the primary cause of disease, and good food as the primary cause of healing."[41] Instead of food deprivation functioning as an act of repentance, as it often does in the Judeo-Christian tradition, in the Hindu tradition it functions as a path to health. In the Hindu conception, once the body was cleansed and perfected a person could begin attempting to reach a spiritual union with the

[40] Quoted in Klevalina, "A portrait of the First Lady of Yoga."
[41] Wendy Doniger, "Medical and Mythical Constructions of the Body in Hindu Texts" in Coakley, *Religion and the Body*.

divine. Devi's desire for spiritual enlightenment propelled her toward altering her entire diet and lifestyle, but, recognizing the difficulty of this approach for most Americans, she made more gentle suggestions for adapting a yoga regime through diet when she began teaching Westerners. Instead of using a language of renunciation, perfection, or deprivation found in Judeo-Christian traditions, she focused on healthfulness and correcting imbalances in the body through proper diet found in Hindu traditions.

While Devi later finessed her own yoga practice for mass consumption by Americans, she fully embraced all aspects of yogic living from her earliest training with Krishnamacharya. Devi excelled as a student and became a part of the lineage that made Krishnamacharya one of the main shapers of "radically physicalized forms of yoga across the globe."[42] Scholars have downplayed Devi's place in this lineage and focused on the influence of Sri K Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar, who both studied under Krishnamacharya from the 1930s to the 1950s in Mysore. Devi's crucial role in bringing yoga to the American public, however, justifies her inclusion alongside these other teachers. Krishnamacharya taught Devi, Jois, and Iyengar to develop challenging, flow sequences that were a hallmark of his teaching during this period.[43] Mark Singleton explains that this type of yoga was a "synthesis of several extant methods of physical training that [prior to this period] would have fallen well outside any definition of yoga."[44] During his Mysore period, Krishnamacharya experimented with a variety of

[42] Singleton, *Yoga Body*, 176.
[43] For a very interesting explanation of the motivation behind Krishnamacharaya's emphasis on physical culture during the Mysore period see chapter 9 "T. Krishnamacharya and the Mysore Asana Revival" in Mark Singleton,*Yoga Body.*
[44] Singleton, *Yoga Body*, 177.

physical exercises, tailoring practices to individual students.[45] Once Devi had proved her worthiness, Krishnamacharya moved her out of the all-male group classes and gave her more individualized instruction, which he made less physically strenuous because he believed a woman could not complete the physical sequences he developed for men.

Krishnamacharya informed all of his instruction on *asanas* with his philosophy "that the yoga practice must be adapted to suit the period, location, and specific requirements of the individual," including the student's age, occupation, physical constitution and ability, and the "path to which they feel drawn."[46] Of Krishnamacharya's three most famous students, Devi most closely followed this elastic view of yoga instruction. After Devi had studied under him for a year, Krishnamacharya asked her to start taking extensive notes on her lessons, on which she later based her books in the United States. Around the same time, Devi found out that her husband's job required them to relocate to China. The impending move prompted Krishnamacharya to encourage Devi to begin teaching on her own once she arrived in China, telling her, "you are now leaving us, you will teach yoga. You can do it, and you will do it."[47]

Once again Devi, through her husband, found herself in the company of politically important people. Her husband, who had indulged her desire to study yoga in India, encouraged her to give up the idea of teaching in Shanghai, which at the time was still under Japanese occupation. Refusing to listen to her husband, she established her first yoga school in Shanghai under her maiden name to appease her husband, who was,

[45] Unlike Krishnamacharya, his pupils Jois, and to a lesser extent Iyengar, did not tailor yoga to the individual instead they codified proper postures into a more rigid system of asanas.
[46] Singleton, *Yoga Body*, 188..
[47] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy,* ix.

according to Devi, "afraid of becoming a laughing stock if his wife taught yoga."[48] Devi quickly accumulated 70 students, but regardless of the genuine interest in her teaching she continued to have to field questions about her ability to balance swords, swallow fire, and tell fortunes. Initially, American diplomats' wives made up the majority of her students; as the number grew, she moved her classes to larger and larger spaces, eventually moving into the home of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the future first lady of The Republic of China. There her students "exercise[d] in Madame's bedroom, which was large enough to hold 25 pupils."[49] The classes soon expanded to include men as well. Devi recounted how one of her students had been incarcerated in the "Bridge House, the Japanese lock-up, where prisoners were forced to remain on the floor all the time without stretching their legs."[50] This student had learned *padmasana* (lotus position) and claimed to have taught his cell mates how to sit for hours without suffering the torture of being trapped in a small place. Devi also ran classes for the entire American consulate, whom the Japanese held in the Metropole Hotel as the war progressed. Many of the students in this "prison class" took up yoga out of desperation to do anything other than just sit trapped in the hotel. The adversity Devi faced in Shanghai convinced her of yoga's power to help people. Her time in China lasted the duration of World War II, and led Devi to turn to yoga as "a great source of peace, inspiration, and strength during all the troubled and depressing years of the Japanese occupation and war." Her Chinese,

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[48] Audrey Youngman, "The Grande Dame of Yoga," *Yoga Journal* 130 (1996): 74- 79, 146-148, accessed January 22, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=WekDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA6&dq=yoga+journal+oct+1996&hl=en&sa=X&ei=9oiqUKnWK4GxqgGJ2YGABg&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAA, 75.
[49] Ibid., 77.
[50] Ibid., 78.

European, and American neighbors in Shanghai lived in a desperate city under constant threat of attack by the Japanese. Japanese officials repeatedly searched her home and interrogated Devi and her husband numerous times. All around them "people were dying of cold and hunger in the streets." As hostilities intensified, many of Devi's "friends were killed, imprisoned, or lost." To its residents, the battle over Shanghai began to look like a lost cause in which they "were all doomed to be either level-bombed or blown up by the Japanese, who had decided to turn Shanghai into ashes should they lose the battle for it."[51] Devi was not blind to the destruction that was happening all around her, but she spoke about her time in Shanghai as a trial that proved to her the importance of yoga, telling reporters years later that "in spite of this and much more, I was not only able to remain calm and cheerful, but also to help others do so."[52] Living in Shanghai under Japanese occupation cemented her belief that yoga could potentially cure anything and everything, helping people survive even in the direst situations. The lessons she learned in Shanghai under actual war conditions influenced her response to the pervasive sense of unease she encountered when she moved to the United States during the peak of the Cold War.

Following World War II, Devi and her husband separated and she returned to India and began teaching there. During this time she also wrote the first book on yoga published in India by a Westerner. A friend, Dr. Deshwark, who introduced the Widow Remarriage Act and the Widow Inheritance Act to the Indian Parliament, wrote the

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

foreword, which he assured her would make it a best seller. Devi never saw the reception of her first book in India because in 1946 she had to return to Shanghai after a Chinese general seized her home with the help of fourteen gunmen. Given the urgency of the situation, Devi flew to Shanghai to sell her possessions, fully intending to return to India by ship as soon as possible. While in Shanghai, her American friends became insistent that she go to the United States, lest she become lost to the world. Initially ignoring their pleas, Devi went about her plans, but her friends continued to pressure her and she ultimately purchased two tickets on two separate ships: one bound for India the other for the U.S. She decided whichever left first was the one she would take and, on January 21, 1947, Devi left on a ship bound for San Francisco, California.[53]

Yoga for Americans

Devi stayed in San Francisco briefly before moving to Hollywood.[54] Though she lived alone in Hollywood, she was drawn to the city because Krishnamurti, who had long since abandoned the Theosophical Society, had moved to Ojai, California to lead his own modest spiritual retreat. In Hollywood, Devi opened a small studio at 8806 Sunset Boulevard where she hung out a simple sign stating "Indra Devi, Yoga Classes." Finding herself in another new city, Devi earnestly worked on expanding her teaching, and soon young Hollywood starlets like Jennifer Jones, Greta Garbo, Gloria Swanson, and the

[53] While this kind of game of chance may seem rigged, in the post-war years the ships coming in and out of Shanghai were not on any reliable or set schedule. For more on this period in Devi's live see: Youngman, "The Grande Dame of Yoga."

[54] Once again she intended to return to India to join Bhikku Vira at a nature cure home in Kashmir, however the partition of India in August 1947, which led to the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947 meant that Kashmir was no longer safe; Vira's school burned and he had to hide in the mountains. The only other possible enticement away from the United States was that her husband was still in Czechoslovakia, but he passed away shortly after she arrived in the U.S.

aging dancer Ruth St. Denis began taking lessons with her. Devi's connection to these women came from a fortuitous meeting with Paul Bragg, a famous dietician who had worked with a number of actresses to keep them in shape for the screen. In the tradition of Krishnamacharya, Devi adapted her teaching to fit her students' needs because they needed to stay physically fit and composed. While many of her students enjoyed the novelty of yoga, Gloria Swanson became one of Devi's most outspoken advocates. Swanson, a vocal proponent for healthy living, had already become a vegetarian in the 1920s, and in 1950 petitioned Congress to pass safe food bills related to organic produce. Swanson embraced Devi by promoting her on radio and television. She also gave Devi the title of her first book written in America, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* and modeled poses for the text.

When Devi began teaching yoga in the United States in the late 1940s, she expanded on the kind of yoga Pierre Bernard taught in the later part of his career. Devi, like Bernard, connected yoga to efficiency, self-improvement, and money, but she also domesticated and feminized yoga as a path toward personal liberation within the parameters of a conservative vision of individualism. Devi did not craft this particular vision of yoga prior to coming to the United States; rather, the historical circumstances in which she found herself influenced how she presented both yoga and herself to a broader audience in the early stages of her career. In her writing we can see the ways in which the Cold War and the potential for the U.S. to form political and economic alliances with many Asian countries, contain implicit messages about definitions of gender, which

influenced her work. Understanding these two cultural influences allows us to read Devi's early work in the United States as a practice that she molded to fit within the political climate of the period, encapsulating not only blatant politically motivated activities, but definitions of gender and sexuality as well.

Devi arrived in Hollywood in 1945, the same time the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) had started accelerating the pace of its investigations of the motion picture industry. Thus, Devi's initiation into American culture took place amid the political circus surrounding her Hollywood clients. Devi, having spent the majority of her life in politically unstable environments, had likely internalized the need for foreigners, such as herself, to be cautious in times of political tension. In both of her books from this period, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* and *Yoga for Americans,* Devi took care to make sure that her identity as a Russian woman and her teaching methods for yoga did not appear threatening to American audiences.

Devi introduced herself to Americans in *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* through a carefully crafted autobiographical essay that explained the importance of yoga in her life and legitimized her as a yoga teacher. Legitimization mattered to Devi because, even as late as 1951, the majority of Americans continued to view yoga and yoga teachers as, at best, hucksters and, at worst, devious occultists. Through her writing and her clientele, Devi established herself as a reliable authority. In the eight years between her first and second book, she continued to gain clients both through her studio in Hollywood and through Elizabeth Arden's retreats in Maine and Arizona. Devi's successes between

books grew to position her in an authoritative role; by her second book, *Yoga for Americans,* Devi felt comfortable weighing in on the state of America and Americans. Her observations about the poor condition of the American people led her to create a version of yoga meant to improve people's ability to cope with the stresses of daily life in the U.S.

Experts, Efforts, & Consumption: Creating Safe Individualism

Devi wanted her publications to establish her as an expert who could lead Americans, through individual effort and careful consumption, toward a better life, which would in turn improve the national health. This individualistic attitude fit with a conservative vision of gender identity. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz has argued that in this period popular media embraced the "tension between domestic ideals and individual achievement." Meyerowitz celebrated the1950s as a time when "with a middle-class faith in the individual's ability to rise...that individual effort, careful consumerism, and reliance on experts could bring any woman success, even in the realm of beauty and appeal."[55] Despite Meyerowitz's claims, I argue that embracing individual achievement, especially in terms of health and beauty, rarely challenged the dominant discourses about appropriate displays of femininity during the period.[56] In its call for women to remain subservient to experts, to consume in the name of self-improvement, and to focus on individual effort rather than systemic issues of gender inequality, popular writers created a narrow definition of success that remained within a conservative view of women's roles

[55] Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in *Not June Cleaver: women and gender in postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Temple University Press, 1994), 244-245.
[56] Ibid.

at the time. Furthermore, these achievements were measured in the "realm of beauty and appeal." So rather than promoting individualism that gave women access to a number of choices, these middle-class beliefs reinforced conservative pressure to conform to capitalist, white, patriarchal, middle-class ideals. Devi deployed this model, embracing "tension between domestic ideals and individual achievement" in her own construction of American yoga for white, middle class women who, like Devi, felt "very ill, restless and lonely in spite of having a loving family and many wonderful friends."[57] Predating Betty Friedan's "the problem with no name" by a decade, Devi tapped into an ennui in white, middle class women's culture, offering an expert solution of self-improvement based in careful consumption rather than systemic change. In both her personal teaching and in her books, Devi, like popular magazines of the time, "bow[ed] to individual striving... portray[ing] beauty and allure as achievements that any woman could attain if she tried hard enough."[58] Her expertise guided women to achieve the full potential of beauty and allure through yoga. Although she claimed that yoga worked toward the "enfoldment of [the] spirit, in fact, Devi's work emphasized youth and health.[59]

The intense focus on the self could suggest that what Devi's yoga system actually offered was an antidote to the "other-directed" personality that had, according to David Reisman, plagued the American individual, specifically men. In response to his concerns of "other-directedness," Reisman championed the man lead by his own "inner-directed" gyroscope. In contrast the "inner-directed" gyroscope promoted by Devi guided

[57] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, ix.
[58] Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique," 245.
[59] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 23.

individuals toward a path that conformed to feminine values of beauty, youth, patience, calmness: values championed by outspoken conservatives. Instead of subverting any kind of corporatist, other-directed agenda, the "inner-directed" self-improvement that yoga provided reinforced gender norms and taught women to internalize the approval of the external world.

Devi became known as the expert on yoga not because she had trained under Krishnamacharya or because she had taught Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, but because she taught Hollywood's elite. Writing an accessible and practical book about yoga to Americans solidified her position as an authority. In addition to teaching stars, Devi legitimated her yoga system and positioned herself as an authority by highlighting three main aspects of her life: how yoga healed her, how regal and cosmopolitan her experiences had made her, and how she escaped from Soviet oppression to become a Westerner. Without any scientific or authoritative evidence of the positive effects of yoga, Devi presented herself as the proof of yoga's effectiveness in treating Western ailments. She explained in the foreword of *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* that yoga "transformed [her] from a sick, nervous and unhappy woman into a happy human being, healthy and relaxed both physically and mentally." Before becoming a yogi, she was "very ill, restless and lonely in spite of having a loving family and many wonderful friends"[60]

Devi presented her experience with yoga in a vague way, thereby allowing readers to relate to Devi without feeling like yoga would only work in specific cases. In

[60] Ibid., ix.

addition to relating the miraculous experience of having her heart trouble healed, Devi goes on in her introduction to explain the less miraculous ease in which she suddenly lost a taste for meat. After a few short months of practicing yoga and abstaining from meat, Devi found that she had regained a "girlish figure, wrinkles vanished from [her] face, and [her] skin became smooth and firm." She also claimed to feel "as light and carefree as a school girl on a summer vacation."[61] Careful not to make any life-saving medical claims regarding the application of yoga to the modern American woman, Devi instead focused on its restorative powers, in part because she believed her audience cared more about regaining a youthful appearance than a medical miracle. Devi legitimized herself and her teachings by offering herself and Gloria Swanson up as living proof of yoga's success as an anti-aging regime; in doing so, she also framed yoga within mainstream ideals of feminine beauty that had long been part of her identity since her time as an actress.

Further appealing to ideals of beauty and celebrity, Devi portrayed her life as cosmopolitan and glamorous, making her an even more desirable teacher in Hollywood. Devi explained to her readers that she came from a wealthy and well-connected family, mentioning that her godfather was a "Georgian prince from Caucasia" who worked with Chinese silk vendors. In this passing sentence, Devi linked herself to royalty and cast herself as one who inherited a cosmopolitan connection with Asia. Beyond family ties, her turn in the "Der Blaue Vogel" theater appealed to two fantasies, appearing on stage and touring Europe, which may have been harbored by an average American. Amidst her retelling of her travels with the theater, she briefly mentioned a first, doomed engagement

[61] Ibid., 19.

to a man who promised to take her to India on his yacht; her casual mention of this expensive promise suggests a women for whom such trips were commonplace. Her claims to cosmopolitanism and elite connections did not stop with her recounting her life in Europe; she also dazzled her readers with a list of the world-famous Indians she met while living abroad: Mahatma Gandhi, poet Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Crown Prince of Mysore. Devi's portrait of her enchanted life in India continued with her rise to stardom as an Indian film actress and then her successful marriage to her first husband. In sum, Devi's life reads as a series of effortless turns of luck. When she needed money it materialized, and when she was ill she found a fast and practically effortless cure that gave "her everything that has real value."[62] In reality, wealth and privilege engendered most of these life experiences. While these claims did not make her a better yoga instructor, they certainly made her the kind of woman whose life many people would admire and covet. Furthermore, her humble concluding thoughts about the "real value" of yoga (health and well-being) reassured the reader that while she had an exceptional material life, real happiness happened without money.

Many American women may have wanted to emulate Devi's healthy and wealthy lifestyle, but under the cloud of the prevailing Cold War paranoia, they also might have chafed at her Russian citizenship. To that end, Devi forcefully positioned herself as a "Westerner" who understood and could share what "yoga has to offer to the weary, tense and nervous Western world."[63] Still a Russian citizen at this point, Devi's stance as an American, rather than a "Soviet," would have been tenuous in the eyes of many

[62] Ibid., 22.
[63]Ibid., ix.

Americans. To dispel any potential concerns, Devi carefully emphasized her parents' connections with the West; describing her father as a "blond Swede, without any oriental background or leanings" and her mother as a sophisticated, denizen of St. Petersburg (not Leningrad), one of the most Western cities in pre-revolutionary Russia. More importantly, she portrayed herself as a refugee from the Soviet Union. The Russian revolution, she indicated, had blocked her from fulfilling her destiny as a yogini in India. Only after she "had escaped to Germany" and traveled to all the "beautiful places" in Europe, was she able to reach her dream of traveling to India. Through this circumspect way, Devi implied that further exposure to the West better prepared her for her journey to India. After training in India, Devi described how she moved to China to teach yoga, but she took pains to say that while in China she taught mostly Americans and lectured at meetings of the European Medical Association. All of these details served to reassure readers that Devi's citizenship held a secondary position to her role as a Westerner. In addition to distancing herself from a Soviet past, Devi's experience in India aligned her with Westerner colonizers rather than Indians. These distinctions gave Devi more authority than she might have had if she highlighted strong ties to India or her teacher Krishnamacharya.

Devi's emphasis on autobiography in her introduction positioned her as a desirable role model and legitimate yoga teacher for American pupils. She attached a familiar, Western, and feminine sensibility to yoga carried by her own charismatic life story. Built into that sensibility and autobiographical framework lay an emphasis on individualism as the path to better living.

Crucial to understanding the increasing importance of yoga in America is the concept of self-improvement via individual effort. Devi's prescriptive yoga courses covered everything from physical postures to mental health to diet. In so doing, the classes functioned to help people improve themselves on their own through the careful consumption of yoga. While Devi recognized the importance of a yoga instructor in achieving greater mastery of more advanced yoga concepts and practices, she also believed that via individual effort a person could be capable of a number of challenging *asanas*, such as headstands and full lotus. As folklorist Sandra Dolby noted in her work on self-help books, the self over the course of the twentieth century became far more important than any kind of community. Even Americans' ability to participate in community required individual issues be addressed first; only once one had perfected the self did they emerge as a productive member of a group. Yoga, as Devi presented it and as it is still widely understood, followed this same system of inward improvement as a prerequisite to outward action. Dolby formulated four different types of individualism in self-help books: the obligated self, the social self, the wounded self, and the detached self. In *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (1953) Devi promoted an individualism that incorporated aspects of the wounded self, reaching out to readers "immersed in culture but unable to relate to others in a healthy way." Later in *Yoga for Americans* (1959) she makes use of the social self, when writers "offer suggestions for achieving self-

fulfillment within the wider community."[64] Indicative of Devi's desire to Americanize yoga, in neither of her books does she promote the detached self, which Dolby connects to the influence of Eastern philosophy.[65] The self that Devi pushed her students toward was one more familiar to Western audiences.

Even as she focused on more Western notions of the self, Devi introduced concepts that linked the mind and body in contrast to mainstream understandings of a more compartmentalized self. In her books, Devi emphasized the "wounded self," which expands upon Dolby's definition beyond the purely psychological to make connections between the mind and the body. For Devi, one could not separate mental and emotional strife from the weakness in the body. Healing the wounded self necessitated the improvement of the individual, rather than a systemic reassessment of the culture that has possibly caused the suffering. So even when Devi wrote, "I have decided to give you a true picture of what Yoga has to offer the weary, tense and nervous Western world," what she truly offered her readers were individual solutions to cope with contemporary society.[66]

In Devi's presentation of yoga, one could become self-realized through eternal youthfulness and health. To this end Devi was only interested in teaching Americans Hatha yoga, based on the belief that other branches of yoga, such as *karma, jnana, bhakti, mantra* and *raja* "are not well suited for people living a busy life in a big city." Hatha

[64] Sandra Dolby, *Self-Help Books: Why Americans Keep Reading Them* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005) 22 & 23.
[65] Ibid., 20-24.
[66] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, ix..

yoga, however, "has a very illuminating and practical message for the weary and restless Western world." Moreover, Devi believed a person could become their best and most attractive self by practicing yoga, a opinion that holds has a conspicuous role in her book. This shift toward yoga as a means to achieve attractiveness marked an important evolution of the practice. Yoga became a way to "remain youthful, vital and alert, regardless of your calendar age; how to lose or gain weight; how to get rid of premature wrinkles, and keep a smooth skin and clear complexion."[67] Like so many other self-help books, pharmaceuticals, and wonder products, Devi positioned yoga as something for a person to consume in order to quickly achieve the idealized self in American society.

For Devi, health and youthfulness stemmed from both physical and mental well-being. Devi made the body central to her explanation of yoga, devoting the majority of her book to an exploration of the effects of yoga on the body. In a chapter titled "The Woman Beautiful" Devi encourages her readers to undergo a sadomasochistic self-evaluation, which seems to contemporary readers to be more at home in a dysfunctional sorority than in a yoga book. Devi advised her readers to find a mirror and assess themselves both clothed and naked. Through this process, and if viewers were honest with themselves, they "will know why you are too fat or too thin; why your skin is flabby and your complexion sallow..." Devi asked her readers to confront themselves with their potential personal failings. She also casually suggested that some might smack themselves across the face if they are aghast by what they see in the mirror. After the

[67] Ibid., 25.

physical examination, a person should dig into their psyche to find the shadows of doubt and self-loathing that distort their physical appearance.

One of the key ways a person could change their unsatisfactory reflection in the mirror, Devi believed, was to exercise, which in the early 1960s had become as popular as diet in the category of "American woman's favorite obsession."[68] Devi centered the physical exercises she taught on posture, believing it made a huge difference in general appearance; a person "who is ill, who has lost the zest for life or his self-confidence usually shows it by the way he carries himself. A straight spine generally means youthfulness, optimism, courage, good health, and bright spirits."[69] The temporary solution to poor posture was "to keep your spine and shoulders straight, head erect, and to move in a natural graceful and relaxed manner."[70] All additional postures Devi prescribed would shape different parts of the body to make the muscles lean and more pliable, as well as correct organ functions, and all of the physical changes worked in concert with rebuilding a body to its natural state of grace and relaxation.

In *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, Devi introduced relaxation as an elusive state for the harried, modern person. She painted a picture of tense Americans incapable of relaxing naturally and turning to cigarettes and alcohol as the only brief respite from their tense existence. All of this hurrying and decidedly un-relaxed living would make a person "prematurely old and sick, a nervous wreck, tired of life and scared of death...with

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[68] "Books Cover Many Kinds of Exercises," *New York Times (1923-Current File),* May 05, 1964, accessed January 22, 2013 http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/115800351?accountid=7118.
[69] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, 48.
[70] Ibid., 50

anxiety, fear and frustration written on their faces."[71] Devi suggested that one could the cure most of these problems through greater relaxation. Furthermore, relaxation would allow a woman to have greater "poise and charm, two great assets of feminine beauty."[72] Devi saw the loss of femininity as a problem facing American women as more professional options became open to them. Retaining femininity would allow a woman to be "much more attractive and successful than a tense, strained, and 'hard boiled' female." Devi did not reject the path of the career woman, being one herself, but she believed that middle-class white women's pursuit of careers created tension and antagonism between men and women, which would not end until men recognized women as equals. Though Devi recognized that sexism truly was the greatest barrier to women's success in the workplace, she cautioned that women must not imitate men, but remain ever "conscious of her essential feminity[sic]."[73] Via relaxation, Devi hoped to help women find their true inner core and "essential femininity."

Relaxation was a central concern in the middle-class post-war culture. Anxiety about nuclear annihilation hung over Americans as they adjusted to expanding corporate structures that threatened individualism. These systems created a picture of company men clad in gray flannel suits on the brink of self-destruction and in need of a calm, safe, domestic environment tended to by a loving wife. The characterization of idealized domestic bliss hinged on the unflappable, loving wife who maintained a personal nirvana for her husband. Yoga tapped into this desire to relax, while also promoting the idea that

[71] Ibid., 42.
[72] Ibid.,119.
[73] Ibid.

relaxation required concerted effort. This goal was echoed in reports on yoga at the time purporting that business women were able to stop taking prescription medication after studying yoga, and suburban women attending classes at local stores reported the miraculous disappearance of headaches, insomnia, and tension with only a few minutes of yoga a day. With these practices, women supposedly emerged serene, calm, and less irritable—admirable attributes in any person, but especially desirable traits in the wake of anti-mother sentiment popularized in Philip Wylie's *Generation of Vipers* (1942). Not wanting to become or be perceived as a "human calamity," as Wylie termed mothers of the day, the emerging generation of housewives looked to self-improvement to maintain their feminine charm in order to avoid label of viper or tyrant. This self-improvement did not erase the structural conditions of gender inequality even the cantankerous Wylie recognized; mom, he said, "will act the tyrant--because she is a slave." [74] Personal relaxation and calm could not truly erase the causes of a person's tension and discontent.

Much of the personal strife and discontent on which Devi focused in her texts dealt with specific concerns about individual dissatisfaction women felt with their role in society, but her text also connected individual well-being directly to the health of the nation as well. The global concerns of the Cold War that weighed in Americans' minds during this period deteriorated their health through stress, Devi believed. Rather than address these broader sources of stress in a combative way, Devi argued that through a yoga practice Americans would help their nation become stronger on the international stage.

[74] Philip Wylie, "Common Women," *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Pocket Books, 1955), pp. 196. By 1955 the book had gone through twenty reprints.

Although Devi's system of yoga focused on the individual, she framed the practice in terms of cultural exchange, or how Eastern practices could benefit Westerners, as well as how those practices fit in the contemporary concerns of the Cold War. Devi walked a fine line of openly embracing foreign practices for Americans and erasing those cultural ties. She asked that the reader not "recoil at the mention of Yoga," admitting that she "hesitated to use this word because it has been so badly abused and misused." Taking care to separate herself from the "unscrupulous adventurers and charlatans" who had promoted yoga in the U.S., she reassured her readers that she presented them with an "ancient method of physical, mental and spiritual training." Furthermore, she argued that "yoga postures, breathing and relaxation exercises are taught everywhere in America and Europe without mention of their real origin." In a few short paragraphs of *Yoga for Americans*, Devi dispensed with the negative, foreign connotations of yoga and familiarized Americans with yoga by linking it to exercises already practiced in the West.[75]

In *Yoga for Americans*, Devi portrayed the U.S. as a nation in the midst of a crisis of poor mental and physical health, a crisis undermining the U.S.'s efforts in the Cold War that yoga had the potential to cure. Even the title suggests a concern with the national body politic rather than just the individual. In the preface to the book, Devi wrote how she wanted Americans to fully understand the health benefits of yoga because, in her opinion, the nation's health was appalling. She painted a bleak picture of the American population riddled with cancers, mental illnesses, and general unfitness. Citing

[75] Devi, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, ix.

rising cancer rates, mental illness, unfitness for military service, and degenerative diseases, Devi argued that if yoga was taken up as a national practice "it would help considerably in decreasing the menacing incidence of physical and mental disorders." [76] Ridding the population of these disorders was, in her opinion, the only way to improve the quality of the nation. Devi found the rise of degenerative diseases in the U.S. distressing enough to include a quote by the president of the American Academy of Nutrition that stated: "This country of once strong, vigorous and adventurous people will become a nation of invalids, not only weak in body, but also weak in mind."[77] In response to this declaration of a weak national body, she called for yoga "to be added to the curricula of our schools, colleges and training camps" because "yoga can help solve the problems of any receptive individual...[and] eventually, also help solve the problems of a group, society and even a nation."[78] To that end, she suggested that the space race was a waste of intellectual resources and that the pursuit to reach the moon came at the price of an infirm and mentally imbalanced American citizenry. More explicitly, she argued "yoga can solve the problems of any receptive individual, whether these problems be of a physical, mental, or spiritual nature and thereby, eventually, also help solve the problems of a group, society and even a nation."[79] Devi's acknowledgement of the increasingly tense Cold War and her promotion of a healthy nation suggest that she was

[76] Indra Devi, *Yoga for Americans: A Complete 6 Weeks' Course for Home Practice* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1959), xi.
[77] Ibid., x-xi.
[78] Ibid., xi.
[79] Ibid.

also trying to more closely tie yoga to the West. Yoga, rather than rockets, could serve as a weapon for the U.S. in the fight against the Soviets.

Devi explicitly wrote about yoga as a potential weapon in the Cold War, an authorial choice that indicated how the anxieties of the period seeped into all corners of American life. The average American during the Cold War experienced heightened pressure to conform and an increased wariness of any foreign practices that could be misconstrued as an endorsement of communism. Additionally, politically conservative attitudes seeped out of the political theatrics of McCarthyism and HUAC and into broader cultural concerns regarding correct sexual, gender, and domestic roles. Members of groups such as the John Birch Society produced a vision of a perfect past where clearly defined gender identities dictated that women's roles be limited to housewives and mothers as part of a mythologized natural order. These more extreme views of gender roles were not limited to the most conservative groups in society, as they became part of the popular discussion of idealized gender roles. Though the idealized roles were narrow, in geopolitically uncertain times they expanded symbolically to make women the guardians of national security and stewards of domestic normality.

The emphasis on women as guardians of domestic normality heightened the importance of women cultivating a calm, serene domestic environment. What happened in the American home became a symbolic battleground in the Cold War, positioning domestic peace and happiness as a primary concern. Nowhere can this rhetoric be more clearly seen than in the so-called Kitchen debates in 1959 between then Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Debating the comparative merits

of their countries, Nixon focused on the kitchen display in America National Exhibition held in Moscow that year, touting the modern conveniences the American housewife enjoyed. Consumption, convenience, and idealized womanhood became a symbol of America's superiority to the Soviet society, where women worked next to men and didn't enjoy a new pastel refrigerator or dishwasher. When Devi counseled women to maintain feminine charms and exude peace and calm as a way to improve themselves, as well as their whole society, she entered into a national discourse on the relative merits of the "American way of life."[80]

At the same time, the cultural shift toward more rigidly defined gender roles and their connection with domestic security made it crucial that Devi deemphasize yoga's liberating potential through greater self-awareness. For yoga to fit in with the dominant discourse of acceptable, patriotic behavior it could not challenge the mindset of Americans by offering spiritual or personal awakenings. Instead, yoga could be safely practiced if it focused on physical and mental improvement to reaffirm desirable attributes of femininity that did not threaten the dominant order. Thus, when Devi positioned yoga as a physical practice to help a person cope with modern and physical stress, she could safely fit it within a culture that emphasized a safe, individualism existing within larger "traditional" domestic ideals.

This atmosphere of unfriendliness toward communism and an emphasis on domesticity became conflated with a general wariness toward potentially foreign threats, counter-balanced by an effort in the United States to embrace Asia as a potential ally in

[80] *Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era,* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

the fight against the Soviet Union. Thus when Devi suggested that yoga served as a valuable tool in the U.S. efforts in the Cold War, she implicitly stayed in line with a general cultural interest in Asian culture and, more importantly, with a political interest in Asian nations as allies in the Cold War. As Christina Klein explained in *Cold War Orientalism* (2003), "Between 1945 and 1961 American cultural producers churned out a steady stream of stories, fiction and non-fiction, that took Asia and the Pacific as their subject matter."[81] Klein argues that Asia rose to the fore of the cultural imagination because of an increasing U.S. presence in Asia following World War II. Historically, Americans had viewed Asian nations and its citizens negatively, however, political and economic incentives to keep Asia free from communism and keep Asian markets open to the U.S. resulted in popular depictions of Asia and Asians as potential friends rather than treacherous enemies.[82] Yoga, thus could be recast as a safe, friendly Asian export that Americans could enjoy.

By and large Asia seemed safe because American artists who turned to Asia for inspiration confined Asia in a subordinate role to the U.S.; for example, Roger and Hammerstein's *The King and I* (1951) show Asians as students to the imperial Western teacher and James Michener's *The Voice of Asia* (1951) treated Asia as an object of observation, not actors in their own lives. Even while these works suggested that America could learn something from Asia, it was always clear that the West had more to

[81] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 2.
[82] Negative portrayals of Asia focused on Japan, China, Philippines and India at various points throughout the 19th century and through World War II. Following World War II, negative portrayals of Asia in the U.S. did not entirely subside, but in the period Klein writes about in *Cold War Orientalism*, a distinctly sympathetic view of Asia took hold.

teach the East and that most information about the East served to validate the West's supremacy. Devi followed this same pattern; when discussing Americans' poor health she turns to Asia for a point of comparison: "Not in India, nor in Japan, Hong Kong, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand or Cambodia...did I find anything approximating this situation - in spite of all the epidemics, unsanitary living conditions, the poverty and ignorance of hygiene."[83] Here Asian countries offer a better approach despite being inferior to the West in economic and the fight against disease. Information about Asia circulating in the U.S. often only served to aid U.S. efforts to exploit Asia economically and politically. While Devi did not seek to exploit Asian markets, she did promote yoga as an element of Indian culture that could help Americans help themselves as individuals and within the culture of the Cold War.

Conclusion

Arguing that the type of yoga Devi developed was meant for middle-class white women is not to challenge the "authenticity" of her system of yoga. Devi's tailoring of the practice to a specific audience is in line with Krishnamacharya's teaching. The primary differences being that Krishnamacharya tailored each system to a specific student, whereas Devi was engaging with a wider, more generalized audience she broadly defines as the tense and harried West. Furthermore, Devi tapped into the convenience of printed books to reach a larger audience, which was more successful in a country like the United States with high literacy rates and the ability of people to afford books. While it is arguably better to learn new skills directly from another person, especially those that

[83] Devi, *Yoga for Americans,* x.

require physical precision, Devi's willingness to write manuals on Hatha yoga allowed her to reach far more people than she could have in her studio in Los Angeles.[84]

Devi's texts in the early 1960s focused on establishing herself as an expert who offered yoga as a consumable practice that emphasized self-improvement as the best path toward wellness. Within this framework Devi positioned yoga so that it conformed to safe ideals of liberation, which did not challenge dominant discourses about femininity, but instead urged women to practice yoga to enhance their feminine beauty and health. Furthermore, she tied individual improvement to the improvement of the nation during the Cold War. Through this process, Devi feminized and domesticated yoga, making it far more accessible and acceptable than previous popular incarnations of yoga in America.

Devi eventually became the most prominent female yoga teacher in the United States during the twentieth century, although her style changed as interest in yoga began to shift away from physical, individual well-being toward the desire to adapt entirely new lifestyles and the creation of alternative communities. In the mid-1960s she created a new type of yoga she called Sai Yoga, after her new guru Sai Baba, that incorporated more mediation and devotional practices than her previous teachings. Sai Yoga remained a minor practice in the U.S., but gained a large following in South America, bolstered by Devi's relocated to Buenos Aires, Argentina in the 1980s. Even though Sai Yoga did not play a prominent role in the U.S. yoga scene by 1975, Indra Devi had firmly earned her place as the "First Lady of Yoga" in the United States, while Indian men had grown to

[84] Devi based on her own negative experience with more esoteric aspects of yoga from a book that practicing higher levels of yoga without a proper teacher could be dangerous to ones health.

dominate the leadership roles in the yoga community Devi, more so than contemporaries like Lilias Folan who had a yoga show on PBS, had successfully established herself as an authentic yoga teacher. Her history as being the first Western woman to be taught by Krishnamacharya and her broad reach throughout the 1950s and early 1960s led many to view her as a pioneer. The next chapter focuses on the ways in which popular understandings of yoga shifted radically in the late 1960s, leaving behind Devi's focus on healthy, attractive housewives in order to focus on young white adults interested in mind expansion and alternative communities.

Chapter Four: The Ananda Village: Yoga and Intentional Communities in the 1960s and 1970s

While Indra Devi played an important role in feminizing and domesticating yoga in the 1940s and 1950s, a concurrent type of yoga, known as the Self-Realization Fellowship, would come to dominate the way in which young adults viewed yoga in the late 1960s and 1970s as an otherworldly, exotic practice. Young Americans who turned to the East looking for ways to expand their minds and create alternatives to dominant culture displaced the leotard-wearing housewives searching for youth and beauty within the strictures of Cold War culture. These two mid-century developments in yoga would merge and shape the mainstream types of yoga practiced by most Americans today: yoga practices that lie in a sometimes-contradictory relationship between physical self-improvement and spiritual enlightenment.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a turning point in the popularization and understanding of yoga in the twentieth century. Even though its intellectual and spiritual roots rested in the pre-WWII era, the yoga popular in the late 1960s and 1970s distinctly differed from that of the 1940s to early 1960s. The dominant understanding of yoga shifted from a means of physical improvement and beautification tied to the improvement of national character, toward an understanding of yoga that focused on meditation and introspection linked to a desire to foster alternative ways of seeing and living in America. This wish for alternative ways of living, particularly among the young adults of the Baby Boomer generation, resulted in a substantial increase in the creation of small,

independent, intentional communities. In keeping with the goals of this dissertation to explore how white Westerners taught and promoted yoga, this chapter explores yoga in the 1960s and 1970s via a lesser-known intentional community, the Ananda Village, founded by J. Donald Walters, who adopted the name Swami Kriyananda. The Ananda Village, founded in 1969 (and still open today both as an intentional community and as a public yoga retreat), exemplified emerging attitudes about yoga in the United States that re-situated the practice in terms of esoteric power that people could harness to improve their lives and create better communities, harkening back to the work of Katherine Tingley, who sought to accomplish this through her work in the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. Kriyananda and his followers, though not affiliated with the Self-Realization Fellowship, did and still follow the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda, under whom Kriyananda studied in the late 1940s. Through Kriyananda's teaching and work at the Ananda Village, we can see central concerns of the period—anti-consumerism, communalism, environmentalism, feminism, and the expansion of immigration policies—reflected in how he promoted yoga and the Ananda Village at this time.

Kriyananda's Ananda Village represented a small slice of yoga in the United States that rode the popularity of yoga via two Indian teachers, Paramahansa Yogananda, the founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship and author of *An Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation and the guru to a number of celebrities, most importantly including The Beatles. Like a growing number of Americans, Kriyananda became interested in yoga after reading Paramahansa

Yogananda's autobiography, however, it was the later interest in the celebrities following the Maharishi that contributed to a notable increase in interest in all things Eastern among a larger swath of young adults during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Americans' exploding attention to Eastern spirituality and yoga reignited concerns that yoga was potentially dangerous and deleterious to an "American" way of life. The Cold War concerns regarding safe domesticity and personal beautification that played such an important role in yoga up until the 1960s gave way to a desire to unleash human potential and create a better society. In some instances, such as the Ananda Village, young adults sought to create not only a safe space for spiritual exploration, but also a place to create alternative understandings of community, consumerism, and gender. By looking at the Ananda Village in terms of its success in comparison to other intentional communities established at the same time, we find that the community's success rested largely on Kriyananda's willingness to retain certain core values of the "establishment" that many intentional communities rejected wholesale: capitalism, an anti-drug stance, and heterosexual monogamy. The Ananda Village, in its continued success today, complicates the superficial image of yoga in the 1960s and 1970s as a practice that was not influenced by capitalism or materialism. Despite the Ananda Village's relatively conservative views that barely challenged normative discourses of gender hierarchies, in the collective popular imagination yoga remained a supposedly feminine practice. The continued feminization of yoga resulted from a longer Orientalized historical interpretation that feminized the East in comparison to the West; feminization was also the product of a more recent history of yoga in the United States (discussed in previous

chapters) in which its association with "wealthy dowagers" and housewives reinforced its ostensible femininity.

Nineteenth Century Attitudes in the Mid-twentieth Century

Even though Kriyananda and many other Americans used yoga as a way to broaden their perception of the world, Americans' understanding of Indian culture and spirituality retained the vestiges of a colonial world-view. This chapter shows that despite the Indian government's concerted efforts to modernize India and an unprecedented influx of Indian immigrants to the United States in the 1960s, Americans continued to view yoga, India, and even Indians as timeless vessels of universal truths without widely recognizing social advancements in India or the changing flows of people and culture around the world. Furthermore, the popular understandings of Indian culture and yoga in the United States through much of the nineteenth and twentieth century hinged on images that circulated through a British colonial filter.

Popular representations of India and yoga in the late 1960s and into the 1970s retained a timeless, mystical quality that rested upon a history of colonial power relations operating in terms of racial and gender hierarchies. In the 1960s and 1970s, yoga emerged as a kind of shorthand view of the East that incorporated timelessness, meditation, spirituality, open-mindedness, peacefulness, and enlightenment. Americans in the 1960s and 1970s interested in India maintained a snapshot of India as a place of spiritual growth. In this image, India became nothing more than a spectacle of mystical enchantment and amazing feats of physicality through yoga, rather than a dynamic, growing, modern society. These images, created and viewed at a distance, served the

interest of the viewer not the viewed. Americans could borrow these manufactured spectacles to use toward their own improvement, a borrowing that resulted in an unintentional re-inscription of colonial power, allowing Americans to retain a level of power over Indian culture by denying its modernization or role in the current global economy and thereby creating a hierarchical culture exchange.

Despite India's independent sovereign status, the country's position as a "third world" allowed Westerners to fix India in a particular historical moment in which privileged Westerners believed they could flit in and out of, without concerning themselves with real political repercussions for the people or culture they used. Even after Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's work to fulfill his vision of India as "a free and self-reliant" country with a strong scientific backbone, Westerners clung to a colonial view of an anti-modern Indian through the 1960s and 1970s.[1] Within this colonial view, the West imagined itself in an invisible position of power, choosing to look and borrow at will without threatening their social, political, or economic power in their established global hierarchy; no matter how much appropriation occurred, the West maintained its identity and the power derived from that identity.

Even as appropriation of other culture did not truly threaten a national or personal Western identity, non-practitioners of Eastern beliefs in the 1960s and 1970s viewed those who did appropriate foreign practices with apprehension and some confusion. To a skeptical outsider, a person adopting Eastern practices ran the risk of absorbing too much

[1] As evidence of this commitment to scientific education the number of technical schools in India grew from 38 institutions graduating 2,940 students in 1948 to 102 institutions graduating 13,820 students in 1961 with growth continuing at this pace throughout the 20th century. Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 76.

of the East. Even an individual or small group of people rejecting Western beliefs in favor of a devoted yoga practice, or yet a magpie collection of Eastern beliefs, challenged a belief in a Western narrative of progress and domination. At the heart of this challenge to Western thought was a feminized understanding of the East. This hierarchical, gendered understanding of the world's regions when combined with the changes of gender roles within the United States, compounded the concerns that adopting Eastern practices was another step toward the dissolution of "traditional" American values. Overall, when yoga in the 1960s and 1970s is viewed through an understanding of gender, the effect of simply practicing yoga on some level subverted dominant discourse of gender, culture, and power, but also, due to the complicated relationship between colonial understandings of India that lingered in the post-colonial era, reaffirmed yoga as a feminine practice in the minds of the majority of Americans.

Colonial dynamics still existed in the mid-twentieth century, creating an often unacknowledged and unbalanced relationship between the U.S. and India. Americans adopting Eastern practices reinforced a global order that reasserted Americans dominance in the world. Even though the U.S. was still in the heyday of what Henry Luce named the "American Century" among young, white, middle class students, who benefitted the most from the economic, political, social, and cultural conditions of the United States, a growing discontent with the values and aspirations of mainstream American society led many young adults to look to other cultures for guidance and inspiration in search of a better life. The modes of cultural appropriation undertaken, however, served individual needs far better than any national or global concerns.

The Counterculture Youth's Growing Interest in the East

Increasing interest in yoga in the West in the second half of the twentieth century largely sprung from The Beatles' work with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi that began in 1967. The Beatles' relationship with the Maharishi, the creator and proponent of Transcendental Meditation (TM), led to a veritable explosion of interest in the teachings of the "East." As one of the most important and popular bands of the 1960s, The Beatles held immense sway over their fans and other musicians. Where The Beatles went, so did their fans and fellow musicians. When George Harrison's wife began studying Transcendental Meditation after a trip to India, the members of The Beatles also took an interest, setting off a firestorm of interest in yoga and Transcendental Meditation from their fans. The Maharishi began developing TM under Swami Brahmananda Saraswati (1869-1953) and, following Saraswati's death, he began teaching TM publicly in 1959. TM consists of the repetition of a private, individualized mantra that a student repeats to themselves for twenty minutes, twice a day to evoke deep relaxation with the ultimate goal of realizing God.[2] The simplicity of the practice and the celebrity attached to TM led one fan and convert to admit, "if meditation is good enough for John Lennon, it's good enough for me."[3] Immediately, The Beatles' interest in TM attracted reporters and led to more and better attended speeches by the Maharishi all over the U.S. and the U.K. As Lewis Lapham documented in *The Saturday Evening Post,* that people felt that "the

[2] For a more detailed look at Transcendental Meditation (TM) see Lola Williamson, *Transcendent in America: Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as New Religion*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

[3] American Getchen Woelfle made this statement while reflecting on her life in London in 1967 in Philip Goldberg, *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation - How Indian Spirituality Changed the West,* (New York: Harmony Books, 2010), 153.

publicity...transformed the yogi into a household name, which was good news because it meant that as more people...found peace within themselves, so also they would project their inner tranquility outward into the disturbed world and thus put an end to chaos, misery, and war."[4] Or so they thought. The relationship between celebrities, the Maharishi, and the Western public created a situation in which the Maharishi capitalized on the desire of some Westerners to find a simpler, more "authentic" approach to life and by doing so reinforced a relationship of colonial dominance over Indian culture.

Additionally, within the compound of the Maharishi at Rishikesh, India, yoga emerged for some in the 1960s as another containable experience, rather than a new lifestyle, positioning it in a liminal state between commoditized experience and an antidote to materialism. Under the very public, celebrity-driven movement of the Maharishi, one could find well-heeled New Yorkers arriving at Rishikesh to see the Maharishi via helicopter, drinking powdered Sanka coffee. One wealthy couple explained to their fellow visitors at the ashram that Indian music was all the rage at cocktail parties and how "in Westchester [a wealthy suburban county outside of New York City] a lot of people are doing yoga."[5] While the couple from New York effused on the hipness of India, other Americans in residence at the ashram found it disillusioning to watch the Maharishi joyfully observe the helicopter. For many the Maharishi's "fondness for modern technology" did not jibe with their desire "to live on roots and

[4] Lewis Lapham, *With the Beatles,* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House Publishing, 2005), 50. And Daniel Kreps, "The Late Maharishi's Impact on Music," *Rolling Stone*, February 6, 2008, accessed January 17, 2013, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-late-maharishis-impact-on-music-20080206. The Maharishi inspired songs such as: The Beatles' "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey," Mother Nature's Son," "Across the Universe,"and "Sexy Sadie," Donovan's albums *A Gift from a Flower to a Garden* and *Hurdy Gurdy Man* and the Beach Boys' "TM Song."
[5] Lapham, *With the Beatles,* 121.

berries, to bathe in the Ganges, to wash away their stupidity and pride in the ponds of pure intellect and awakened consciousness."[6] The Maharishi, while providing Americans with a relative ascetic spiritual experience in India, wanted to spread TM and unabashedly embraced the practices of consumer society to promote himself. One of the Maharishi's helpers recounted some additional ideas to Lapham that could be used in the movement: "films, posters, Hindu gods and goddesses sold as dolls, two board games (*God-Consciousness* and *Supreme Knowledge*) similar to *Monopoly*, but the second one to be played only by people who had won the first."[7] These commercial dreams spoke to the Maharishi's mission of personal aggrandizement, but also can be viewed as an updated effort to package his spiritual message in what he viewed as the dominant language of the West, following in the tradition of other yogis before him.

India's Changing Role in the World

In contrast to the flows of Transcendental Meditation and spiritual ideology the political, economic, and social interactions between the India and the Western world revealed a different reality. Whereas ideas about yoga and spirituality tended to cling to an older order of Orientalist imagery, the changing geopolitical conditions reflected efforts of modernization and interconnectedness between India, its people, and the rest of the world. The initial fascination with India, in particular among British pop musicians, established a strange triangulated flow of culture and spirituality between India, Great Britain, and the United States that occurred concurrently with changing immigration

[6] Ibid., 123.
[7] Ibid., 135.

patterns within these three countries. While cultural and spiritual beliefs readily crossed national borders, the relationship between Britain and India, however, remained strained during this period. In the 1960s immigration slowed from South Asia to Great Britain, the result of a sharp swing to the Right in British politics that was in part made up of a vocal "racial preservationist" impulse emerging in the late 1950s. Groups like Oswald Mosley's Union Movement and the White Defence League undertook terror campaigns against minority groups in Great Britain that certainly dissuaded some Indians from moving to the UK.[8] Against this strongly intolerant backdrop, British interest in an independent India on the one hand signaled cultural liberalism, while on the other hand suggested the residual power dynamics between the two countries. Indian spirituality refracted through The Beatles' Transcendental Meditation practice created a circulation of cultural understanding filtered through a colonial framework, where malleable interpretations of the spirituality of India ignored the country's efforts at modernization.

At the same time the British government limited immigration for Indians and The Beatles led a move toward cultural appropriation of Indian spirituality, American politicians, still in the clutches of a Cold War race with the Soviet Union, grasped the potential of scientific education in other parts of the world. U.S. efforts to expand immigration stemmed from two main goals: one, to position the U.S. as a truly open, democratic country; and, two, to bring talented professionals into the U.S. Broader immigration could position the U.S. as a beacon of freedom and equality, and increase its technological advantage over the Soviet Union in the space race. Moreover, decisions to

[8] Prashad, *Souls of Brown Folks*, 77.

siphon the best and the brightest scientists from Asia continued to operate within a colonial discourse on a more removed level. While undoubtedly Indians came to the United States for expanded opportunities, many were participating in a "brain drain": the United States extracted the workers it wanted from India while continuing to bar Indians who were believed to bring no economic or political value to the country. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act eased immigration quotas; however, the sheer number of immigrants into the U.S. surprised policy makers. Prior to the passage of the act, Secretary of State Dean Rusk estimated to a senate subcommittee, "that there might be, say, 8,000 immigrants from India in the next five years" and reassured the senators that the country was not in a "situation where everybody is straining to move to the United States."[9] Rusk, and other policy makers, underestimated Indian's desire to emigrate and the concurrent immigration restrictions on South Asians in England.[10] Instead, the United States saw a large, and initially welcomed influx of professional workers from India, "between 1966 and 1977, 20,000 scientists with Ph.D.s, 40,000 engineers, and 25,000 doctors came from India alone."[11] Despite these figures and the large influx of professionals in the hard sciences from India, the majority of Americans did not alter their view of India as an anti-modern, forever mystical place of colonial imagination. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Cold War attitudes about Asia more generally

[9] Jennifer Ludden "1965 Immigration Law Changed Face of America," National Public Radio, May 9, 2006, accessed January 17, 2013, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5391395.
[10] Prashad, *Souls of Brown* Folks, 77.
[11] Tayyab Mahmud, Genealogy of a State-engineered "Model Minority": "Not Quite/ Not White" South Asian Americans , 78 Denver University Law Review 657-686, 673-677 (2001) in Review Essay: Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) xv, 253, accessed January 17, 2013, http://academic.udayton.edu/race/01race/model03.htm.

favored a view of the continent as wedded to ancient ways and in need of help and friendship from the United States. As immigration laws changed in the 1960s, the cultural attitudes of superiority and inferiority continued to inform domestic views of Asians, even as the laws themselves reflected a more diverse view of Asian immigrants.

Within the context of changing immigration and increasing flows of culture and spirituality, we must also consider the reasons why Eastern spirituality and yoga resonated with such a large number of young Americans at the time. The next section uses the teachings of Kriyananda and the operations of the Ananda Village as a lens to explore the ways in which this community responded to growing concerns about spirituality, consumer culture and capitalism, and domesticity and sexuality.

Intentional Communities

While the postwar period brought a resurgence of interest in the East in terms of the geopolitical concerns of the Cold War, by the late 1960s and 1970s interest in Eastern spirituality became a part of an effort to find alternatives to dominant Western ways of thinking. The primary consensus among scholars of the time held "that youth [on the one hand, had] large and unmet felt needs for community and, on the other hand, [held] that the parental generation, for all its financial success, [did] not present an image of happiness." Furthermore, the abundance that surrounded them allowed them "the luxury to *use* resources instead of being forced to answer questions of survival."[12] Baby Boomers, raised on fears of atomic annihilation, abundant consumer products, and the

[12] Patrick W. Conover, "An Analysis of Communes and Intentional Communities with Particular Attention to Sexual and Gender Relations," *The Family Coordinator*, 24 (4) (October, 1975): 453-464, 455.

promise of a dull, but secure, job downtown prompted many American youth to coalesce around alternative approaches to living in the United States. Moreover, a strong economy, widespread availability of education, and a large cohort of peers created a convergence in which cultural experimentation flowed among middle class whites. With a safety net in place for cultural experimentation in the 1960s, young adults followed the fringe lifestyles of the 1950s Beats.[13] Yet they did not embrace wholesale the nomadic existence romanticized by Beat writers like Jack Kerouac. Instead, young adults increasingly turned to the creation of intentional communities, hoping to create new social orders that would allow them to find sustainable, long-term solutions to society's ills.[14]

The movement toward the development of intentional communities in the 1960s has often been classified as an ahistorical movement, in which the people joining communes allegedly had no idea of previous communes in America. In actuality, many of the 1960s participants in communal living identified parents or other relatives who had some relation to communal living, or communal ideas—"red diaper babies," in particular,

[13] Early on the cultural outlet for the Beats came from African American musicians, but as Stuart Hall's observed that the Beats turned to "hip" African American culture as an escape from systemic societal issues, the young adults of the 1960s and 1970s abandoned that motif as African Americans gained more rights through the Civil Rights movement and became more militant in the late 1960s and 1970s. The changing landscape of race relations in the U.S. led white people to look to Amerindians and Indians because of "the imputed perception of passivity among the segregated Amerindians and the distant Indians." (Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folks*, 51 See also, Stuart Hall, *The Hippies: An American 'Moment'* (Birmingham, England: University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1968). Hall overlooked the influence Asian religion, particularly Buddhism, had on Beat writing, such as Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* (1958) that advocated simplicity and directionless pursuits over capitalist views of success. Rather than refute Hall's argument, the Beats' dabbling in Eastern mysticism, rather than an effort of mastery, reaffirm the distance between youth in the U.S. and Indian culture.

[14] For an encyclopedic entry on the Ananda community James R. Lewis, ed., *Odd Gods: New Religions and Cult Controversy*, (Amherst, NY, Prometheus Books, 2001). offers a straightforward account of the specifics of the community, names and dimensions of buildings, etc.

had relatives who were communists or communist sympathizers. The idea of the communal idea varied widely, and did mean to many an equal sharing of resources; however, Swami Kriyananda, disciple of Yogananda and founder of the Ananda Village, sought to establish an intentional community to protect individuals' spiritual journeys from the negative enticements of American culture. He wrote, "cooperative spiritual communities are needed especially as a means of fostering deeper spiritual awareness," and he also warned those on a spiritual path in America that "for every affirmation of spiritual values, the world cries out a thousand times from all sides that opulence is the answer to all human needs."[15] Kriyananda's efforts proved to be successful as the community continues to function to this day as an intentional community as well as a yoga retreat for visitors. To best understand the intersection of broader cultural concerns and the Ananda Village, we will treat this relationship historically, examining the early work of Kriyananda's guru Yogananda, in the United States in the 1920s, and then consider attitudes about consumerism, psychedelic drugs, spirituality, and sexuality as they were contested and resolved within the Ananda Village.

Paramhansa Yogananda

According to scholar Diana Eck, "Yogananda put yoga on the map in America."[16] While other teachers and gurus had taught yoga across the U.S., Paramhansa Yogananda

[15] Kriyanada, *The Path: Autobiography of a Western Yogi*, (Nevada City, CA: Ananda Publications, 1977), 612.
[16] Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002) e-book available at: http://books.google.com/books?id=FB5nU_3PgJUC&pg=PT153&lpg=PT153&dq=Yogananda+put+yoga+on+the+map+in+America&source=bl&ots=VfdYhFH6yo&sig=WvQDc34Ugrsxu7WUAEvBcUuzC9E&sa=X&ei=w2AuUOTAPM6ByAHSroDQBw&ved=0CBwQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Yogananda%20put%20yoga%20on%20the%20map%20in%20America&f=false.

made the greatest and earliest in roads as an Indian teacher living in the United States. In 1920, Yogananda's guru had a divine revelation that Yogananda had to leave India for America to unite the East and the West through the teaching of yoga.[17] Almost 30 years earlier, Swami Vivekananda had come to the U.S. on a similar mission, however Vivekananda came to the U.S. to explain yoga, raise funds for Indian home rule, and then return to India. Any permanent yoga teaching establishments (Vedanta Societies) were of secondary concern to Vivekananda. While Yogananda assumed he would eventually return to India, he put all of his efforts into teaching as many Americans about yoga as possible in order to create a long lasting and permanent yoga presence in the U.S. He wrote in his autobiography that his guru counseled him:

> 'East and West must establish a golden middle path of activity and spirituality combined,' he continued that 'India has much to learn from the West in material development; in return, India can teach the universal methods by which the West will be able to base its religious beliefs on the unshakeable foundations of yogic science.'[18]

To achieve this goal Yogananda traveled to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1920 to lecture on "The Science of Religion" at the International Congress of Religious Liberals in America. The American Unitarian Association, who organized the meeting, found Yogananda so compelling the conference organizers invited him to stay in Boston past the meeting date. Yogananda remained in Boston for four years before embarking on a transcontinental tour ending in 1925, when he established an American headquarters for his Self Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles. Compared to Katherine Tingley and the

[17] The name Pramahansa is an honorific title, higher than swami, that means "highest swan" - the swan serving as Brahma the Creator's transportation. Yogananda translates to "bliss through divine union."
[18] Yoganada, *Autobiography of a Yogi, (*New York: Grange Books, 2004), 266.

UBTS, Yogananda escaped the public approbation cast upon Tingley and her followers in part because the *Los Angeles Times* was in the midst of a libel suit with Tingley, but also because Yogananda by virtue of his nationality and race was more "authentic" and at the same time willing to adopt Western address and incorporate Christian teachings into his own work.[19] Able to establish a comfortable following in southern California that allowed him to stay in the United States, he developed a style and reputation among contemporary reviewers that "he [was] American in both the terseness of his style and the exuberance of his claims. He speaks in words of popular science, and supports his statements by Hindu lore and verses taken from the Bible."[20] With this concise style, Yogananda offered relatively straightforward advice on spiritual and practical matters that incorporated the more familiar lessons found in the Christian tradition.

It was not until the 1946 publication of *Autobiography of a Yogi* that Yogananda gained access to a national audience, but even then the text did not really reach the pinnacle of its popularity until the late 1960s, when increasing interest in the East created a new and much larger audience for the autobiography. Widely considered a classic religious text, *Autobiography of a Yogi* served as a first introduction to yoga for many Americans throughout the mid-twentieth century. Even those familiar with the teaching of physical yoga popularized by Indra Devi and others would find in Yogananda a far

[19] Though, in 1928, angry husbands living in Miami, Florida did threaten to run Yogananda out of town while he was there on a speaking tour: "Court Gets Plea from Yogananda, " *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),*accessed February 5, 1928. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/162075167?accountid=7118.
[20] Original quote in Wendell Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America* (New York: Beacon Press, 1930), 136-137, can be accessed at: http://www.archive.org/stream/hinduisminvadesa013865mbp/hinduisminvadesa013865mbp_djvu.txt and Harvey Cox, *Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 18 See also Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folks*, 48.

more spiritual and mystical vision of yoga than had been previously published in the United States. Yogananda wrote of dead yoga masters materializing; living gurus able to leave their bodies and appear somewhere else; and yogis with the powers to foretell the future and forestall death. In addition to these more fantastic spiritual accounts, Yogananda held up Jesus Christ as one of his gurus, making Yogananda's teachings more accessible to people with Christian backgrounds. While Devi always stated that anyone could practice yoga regardless of religious beliefs, Yogananda made conversion for hesitant Christians easier, by including Jesus Christ in the line of gurus; although he also possibly made it more difficult for people dedicated to non-Christian religions to follow him.[21] Yogananda included Christ, according to Swami Kriyananda, because he did not want "to 'Indianize' Americans, but to help them spiritualize their own culture."[22] Yogananda not only wrote about Christianity, but throughout his life joyfully celebrated Easter, Christmas, and Thanksgiving, incorporating it into a holistic, spiritual worldview. For all of Yogananda's mysticism, like yogis before him, he carefully couched his message in terms that Americans would respond to positively.

Yogananda died in 1952, well before the flowering of Eastern spirituality in the United States that would be influenced by his teachings, but his followers embraced the changing culture in the U.S., adapting their interpretation of yoga to fit with the times. Following his death, the Self-Realization Fellowship continued to publish Yogananda's

[21] Yogananda's use of Jesus Christ as a guru, was not as a cynic may suspect merely an attempt to placate the West, but part of a larger belief that in the eighteen undocumented years of Jesus Christ's life, Christ had studied in yoga. However, this belief became more popular at a time when there were still efforts to incorporate Christianity into new formulations of Hinduism.
[22] Kriyananda, *The Path,* 202.

correspondence courses, books, speeches, and recordings. As Eck explains, "up until 1965, the Self Realization Fellowship (SRF) was the most extensive Hindu organization in the U.S."[23] The SRF grew into a large bureaucratic system that involved the management of ten ashrams, with eight in California, and the distribution of material. American yogi Kriyananda, who briefly lived with Yogananda in the last two years of his life and founded the Ananda Village in remote Nevada City, California, was one of the leaders of the SRF. However, divisions within the group led to Kriyananda's forced resignation from the SRF. This gave Kriyananda the space to re-interpret Yogananda's teachings in ways that particularly resonated with the cultural interest of the 1960s and 1970s by focusing on the creation of an intentional community that balanced criticisms of consumerism with financial success, individual spirituality and cooperation, traditional attitudes about gender and sexuality, and exaltation of androgyny.

Kriyananda and the Formation of the Ananda Village

By looking at Kriyananda's life one can see a carefully crafted narrative in which he used his biography to portray himself as spiritual leader meant for the 1960s and 1970s. Born into relatively wealthy and fortunate conditions, Kriyananda's life, like the other yoga teachers discussed here, afforded him a position of access to a view of the world through panoptical time. He was born James Donald Walters in Teleajen, Rumania, on May 19, 1926, to American parents who had moved there because of his

[23] Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* no page numbers available Harper Collins, 2002 e-book available at: http://books.google.com/books?id=FB5nU_3PgJUC&pg=PT153&lpg=PT153&dq=Yogananda+put+yoga+on+the+map+in+America&source=bl&ots=VfdYhFH6yo&sig=WvQDc34Ugrsxu7WUAEvBcUuzC9E&sa=X&ei=w2AuUOTAPM6ByAHSroDQBw&ved=0CBwQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Yogananda%20put%20yoga%20on%20the%20map%20in%20America&f=false.

father's work as an oil geologist for Esso. Living in a small Anglo-American ex-pat community, the Walterses led a culturally isolated life, which instilled in Walters a love of a small, closely-knit community that, as a child, required a reliance on imaginative play that brought the children close together. He claimed to be a natural leader, though "unwilling to impose [his] interests on others," and cast himself as "a nonconformist, not from conscious desire or intent, but from a certain inability to attune myself to others' norms."[24] Looking back on his life in his 1977 autobiography, *The Path*, Kriyananda carefully characterized himself not as a misfit, but as a visionary, a person who innately knew the importance of direct experience and individuality. Kriyananda leveraged this self-presentation to establish his authority and, more importantly, to connect with potential followers who may themselves feel detached and alienated from society. Establishing himself as an outsider to other outsiders encouraged them to join him in Nevada City, where they could be understood by a fellow "nonconformist."

While Kriyananda embraced his nonconformist attitude as an adult, he felt alienated as a teenager when he arrived in the U.S. in 1939 at the age of 13. He deployed notions of alienation in his autobiography to connect with a potentially disaffected reader. Even though the life Kriyananda described took place in the 1930s and 1940s, he conscientiously connected it to the contemporary concerns of the late 1960s and late 1970s in an effort to connect with potential followers also experiencing alienation from work, peers, and definitions of success.[25] By the 1940s, Kriyananda had begun to drift

[24] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 11.
[25] This is not to suggest that these feelings haven't existed throughout time, but rather to recognize that Kriyananda responded to more vocal and accepted criticisms of these issues taking place at the time.

and in 1948, not knowing what to do, he enlisted in the merchant marines. Prior to embarking on this new career, he read *Autobiography of a Yoga* and impulsively left New York City for Los Angeles to seek out Yogananda and the Self-Realization Fellowship. Recounting his experience meeting Yogananda, Walters emphasized the role of divine intervention and fate in Yoganada's acceptance of him as a student; for example, despite having his schedule booked for months, the Divine Mother told Yogananda to interview Walters. This initial meeting led Walters on a fast and intense path to studying yoga.[26] Following Yogananda's death in March 1952, Walters remained with the Self-Realization Fellowship, taking his final rites and the name Swami Kriyananda. He took his name from kriya yoga, which Yoganada brought to the United States and explained it in *Autobiography of a Yogi* that at its linguistic roots kriya means "to do, to act and react" and that kriya yoga resulted in a "union with the Infinite through a certain action or rite."[27] In 1958, Kriyananda traveled to India to learn, teach, and develop the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, during his travels he joined the Board of Directors of the SRF and became the First Vice President. Under very murky and contentious circumstances, the leaders of SRF, Daya Mata and Tara Mata, asked Kriyananda to resign from his positions within SRF and to leave the order entirely.[28] Kriyananda admitted that the

[26] In addition to his autobiography, you can find an abbreviated story of his time with Yogananda in John Ball, *Ananda: Where Yoga Lives, (*Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1982). Don't let the university imprint fool you; the keyword here is popular press and Ball's book, like Kriyananda's autobiography, is a celebration, not a critical analysis of Kriyananda's work.
[27] Yoganada, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, 235.
[28] I won't go into the debate here because accounts of the rupture are so entirely biased from either side, and very few people outside of either organization have stepped into the debate. It is enough to say that the battle between Kriyananda and SRF continued into 2002 when a court decision about copyrighted use of Yogananda's teaching and the name Self-realization put a stop to the public antagonism. "The court determined that SRF did not have sole rights to the term "self-realization" nor to the name and likeness of

forced resignation devastated him and he once again began wandering, even spending some time at a Catholic monastery. In hindsight, Kriyananda would claim that the spilt with the SRF allowed him to fulfill what he perceived as Yogananda's real mission to establish small communities of "universal brotherhood" rather than create more layers of bureaucracy through SRF. While Yogananda did express interest in the creation of small communities, he never created any communities, instead he invested his energy into expanding and systematizing the SRF to achieve the greatest possible reach. Kriyananda's interest in focusing on small communities provided him with a relatively manageable starting point in growing his own branch of Yogananda's teaching and also gave him the flexibility to shape yoga in response to the strong cultural changes occurring as the Baby Boomers entered adulthood.

Kriyananda found his personal spiritual outlet teaching yoga in 1967 at the Ananda Village in Nevada City, California. Located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada range, this Northern California outpost shared its border with property owned by Beat poet and Buddhist Gary Snyder. The lore of the foundation of the Ananda community centered on Kriyananda's ability to overcome near financial disasters, struggles with neighbors, and natural calamities including high winds and fires, a narrative that

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Paramahansa Yogananda. A judge also recommended that Ananda keep 'ananda' as part of its name in addition to 'Church of Self-Realization'…And though some of Yogananda's writings were already of the public domain, the court did recognize SRF's ownership of some of his writings and sound recordings." The Court asked Ananda to pay SRF for some of the recordings, but their status as an educational and religious organization allowed them to avoid payments. For more see Carolyn Edy, "Who Owns Yogananda," *Yoga Journal* May-June, 2003, accessed January 18, 2013 http://books.google.com/books?id=vOkDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA26&lpg=PA26&dq=Who+Owns+Yogananda+yoga+journal&source=bl&ots=Qeea6ezkkc&sig=sW5udCGxSo7E7yqCRBFlmKtcmJE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=C3X5ULzlAoe42QW3_IB4&ved=0CDwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Who%20Owns%20Yogananda%20yoga%20journal&f=false, 26.

suggested divine intervention in the successful establishment of Ananda, rather than a combination of poor planning and luck. Kriyananda claimed that he initially wanted the land as a personal retreat, but it quickly evolved into a small community of inhabitants who practiced yoga and followed Kriyananda's teachings. Although he followed the teachings of Yogananda, who emphasized a monastic order of celibates, Kriyananda sought to include families, couples, and other non-renunciates into the inner circle of Ananda. His conscientious inclusion of families and couples helped stabilize the community early on because it created smaller support structures and did not require its community members to abandon entirely their understanding of interpersonal relationships, marking a distinct break with Yogananda, who deemed any close interpersonal relationships as a serious barrier to achieving full union with God and the universe.

Despite the difference of membership between the Ananda Village and Yoganada's original teaching, Kriyananda's interpretation of yoga remained attached to the SRF. Even after his expulsion from the SRF, Kriyananda continued to require his followers to complete the series of Yogananda's teachings published and taught by the SRF. Yogananda's texts primarily combined Eastern interpretations of Christianity, using the Vendata interpretation of the *Upanishads* and the scientific method of Patanjali's *Raja Yoga*, specifically *kriya yoga* from which Kriyananda took his name. The core teaching of Self Realization is based on the belief that the self and God are one, which a person can achieve through *Samadhi,* a super-conscious state. Members of the SRF believe that separateness from God is the main cause of human suffering. Kriya

yoga provides a way to overcome that division. As anthropologist Ted Norquist found in his study of the Ananda Village, "the techniques of kriya yoga are said to lead to a balanced way of life, where the body, mind, and soul of man become attuned to the cosmic laws of life, and the individual is spared the threefold sufferings: physical disease, mental disharmony, and spiritual ignorance."[29] Additionally, Norquist found that most people who joined the commune did not have active social lives. Lacking any strong social ties prior to entering Ananda, community members actually made very few social sacrifices by joining the group. Once in Ananda, community members cited "fellowship with other devotees"(61%) and a close "relationship with Swami Kriyananda" as reasons for staying.[30] This belief system, as discussed in further detail below, resonated with the overarching concerns of youth in the late 1960s and 1970s that strove to find peace of mind and a higher caller with a strong focus on the self.

Anti-Consumer Attitudes and the Search for Alternatives

One of the key cultural shifts that made both drugs and yoga appealing to a wider audience revolved around changing attitudes about the structures of labor and consumption. Whereas Indra Devi counseled her students on how to live happier, more efficient lives within society, later yoga instructors responded more to students' desires to remove themselves from mainstream America's definition of success. Yoga seemed to offer Americans a way to mentally and spiritually disconnect from the perception that

[29] Ted Norquist, *Ananda Cooperative Village: A Study in the Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes of a New Age Religious,* (Uppsala Sweden: Uppsala University Press, 1978), 62.
[30] Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge *American Journal of Sociology*, 85 (6), (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, May 1980) Accessed January 18, 2013: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778383, 1384.

participation in capitalism amounted to nothing more than a sinister, self-imposed prison. As Harvey Cox and Vijay Prashad have argued, the "turn to the East" was similar to the turn toward psychedelic drugs, because "both are a scream of longing for what consumer culture cannot provide- a community of love and the capacity to experience things intensely. Both may supply temporary, short-term relief, but neither has the answer we need so badly ourselves."[31] However, the ability to "turn East," or "drop out" had its own economic logic. A large number of white, young, Americans possessed tremendous social and economic privilege. In the early 1980s, Vijay Reashad and Shiva Naipaul criticized "hippies" for their "'singular blend of eco and ego, of technologically minded worldliness and etherealism, of overripe self-consciousness and opulent complacency' [that] enabled them to walk away from their system, a solution not available to those trapped within it."[32] Without making an effort to change the systemic problems which they themselves attempted to escape, burgeoning yogis participated in a consumption of the East that often was, what one critic of the Maharishi called, a system no different than "learning to play the piano in six easy weeks,"[33] positioning this escapism as another quick fix that only the very privileged could afford the time or money to participate in. The seemingly faster route of drugs was a major stopping point in the journeys toward finding "new ways of seeing" through yoga and other Eastern and New Age practices. If not the drugs, then the mindset that grew from a drug culture influenced and was influenced by individuals' relationships to spirituality and the unknown.

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[31] Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folks*, 51. See also Cox, *Turning East*, 49 & 33.
[32] Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folks,* 52 See Shiva Naipaul, *Journey to Nowhere: A New World Tragedy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 273, 187.
[33] Lapham, *With the Beatles,* 72.

New Ways of Seeing: The Connection Between Drugs and Yoga in the 1960s

The drug culture in the 1960s and 1970s is well-documented in popular culture: Ken Kesey's writing, the Grateful Dead's followers, The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and most famously, Timothy Leary's proselytizing the benefits of LSD. As Martin Lee and Bruce Shalin articulated in *Acid Dreams,*

> If any single theme dominated young people in the 1960s, it was the search for a new way of seeing, a new relation to the world. LSD was a means of exciting consciousness and provoking visions, a kind of hurried magic enabling youthful seekers to recapture the resonance of life that society had denied.[34]

When Lee and Shalin discussed the resonance of life, consciousness-expanding, and provocative visions in secular terms they lost sight of the spiritual connections LSD users desired from that type of exploration. Author Aldous Huxley, discussing his experience with peyote, explained he could see something as ordinary as a vase in an entirely new light: "I was not looking now at an unusual flower arrangement. I was seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of creation - the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence."[35] Similarly, psychonaut Terence McKenna exalted that "LSD burst over the dreary domain of the constipated bourgeoisie like the angelic herald of a new psychedelic millennium. We have never been the same since…for LSD demonstrated…that the mansions of heaven and gardens of paradise lie within each and all of us."[36] Even Timothy Leary, while better remembered for cajoling people to "turn on, tune in, drop

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[34] Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond*, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1992), 143.
[35] Partrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003),134.
[36]Terence McKenna, "Top Ten Greatest LSD Quotes," Alternative Reel, accessed January 18, 2013 http://www.alternativereel.com/soc/display_article.php?id=0000000017.

out," formed the League for Spiritual Discovery. People believed that LSD "could usher one into a pluralistic postmodern world fueled by soul, symbol, subculture, and the Holy Spirit - and then push the psychic adventurer into an inner space of self-validating visions and archetypes."[37]

All of these users and writers recognized one of the primary reasons for dropping Acid was to commune with the world in an intensely personal and revelatory way. These core components of spiritual discovery, such as seeing the Garden of Eden and the Holy Spirit, contributed to the resonance of certain yoga memoirs like *An Autobiography of a Yogi* and, to a lesser extent, *The Path*. Here, Yogananda and Kriyananda offered a world vision that allowed for the miraculous in everyday existence, not only through external, mystical forces, but also via an internal sea change that reframed a person's entire relationship to the world. In the process of making the impossible seem possible, they invited readers to follow their practices in order to open themselves to the infinite universe.

LSD offered a similar entrance to the infinite, but only required a few dollars and half a day. In its relative ease, LSD offered a lot of hope in the service of awakening from a world that for young, white adults seemed to offer very little meaning. The easy solutions offered by LSD was too empty and fleeting for some users, which led them to more spiritual pursuits. The *Los Angeles Times* would bluntly claim: "The popularity of

[37] Robert Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 194.

yoga is especially prevalent among young people who have used drugs."[38] However, after experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs, many people found the experiences lacked deeper meaning than they had hoped, leading some drug users to explore spirituality as a way to access more "authentic" experiences. In the Ananda community, many users experimented with drugs, either for recreation or for spiritual seeking, but they found their drug use unmoored them further rather than connecting them to a larger purpose. One member articulated, "it was total panic, total confusion, not reality...I did not know what was real and what was not real. Nothing to stand on, no firm footing…I was thrown into space."[39] Once off of LSD and into meditation, people reflected about how their lives had improved; in one instance an anonymous former LSD taker and current yogi confessed "when I think back [taking LSD] just seems silly. Just escaping, really, and the more I did it, the more I needed to."[40] While many alternative communities, such as the famous Drop City, became known as drug havens, Ananda had a stringent anti-drug policy. Timothy Miller, in his sweeping survey of 1960s intentional communities, found that most secular communes tolerated, or even advocated, the use of "dope," mainly marijuana and psychedelics (LSD, peyote, and mushrooms). While most secular communes condoned drug use, religious communes had a wider variety of acceptance. The Ananda Village did not tolerate drug use and strictly policed their new community members; one of the main leaders at Ananda Village, Jyotish, also known as

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[38] "Practitioners Describe Yoga as Movement for Saner Life." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),* February 21, 1971, accessed http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/156672946?accountid=7118.
[39] Norquist, *Ananda Cooperative Village*, 96.
[40] Dave Smith, "Despite Guru Fanfare." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Feb 25, 1968, accessed http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/155828396?accountid=7118.

John Novak, "became known as 'The Narc.'" The need for such strong policing emerged from Kriyananda's concerns about unproductive people living at Ananda, potential problems with the neighbors, and a general sense that drugs hindered people's spiritual paths. Despite the leaders' best efforts to attract what they deemed serious spiritual seekers, like other yoga facilities and communes they had to accept the fact that for many people, Ananda would be seen as a safe haven for some of the "refugees from the drug scene trying to get their heads together again."[41]

Drug users who later became involved in yoga and other spiritual quests followed similar patterns, moving from feelings of alienation, to using drugs to see reality, to a disenchantment with drugs, that then led them toward a concrete search for God through a turn inward. In a front page *Wall Street Journal* article, Audrey Abre described the aim of yoga as "increasing awareness, dissolving intellectual and other pretensions, and including a sense of well-being - all without drugs or other artificial means." The widespread appeal of yoga for drug rehabilitation programs had even led the New York Addiction Services Agency to support of establishments such as the Integral Yoga Head Program.[42] Young drug users started to view yoga as a possible alternative to a reliance on hallucinogens and marijuana. Discussing drug culture William S. Burroughs posited, "Anything that can be accomplished by chemical means can also be accomplished by

[41] George L. Beronius, "The 'New Naturalism' at Ananda Commune," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),* July 16, 1972. http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/157057452?accountid=7118.
[42] Audrey Anee, "That Drugless High: More People Take Up Yoga to End Tensions," *Wall Street Journal,* October 21, 1971.

other means, given sufficient knowledge of the process involved."[43] This attitude did lead a number of people toward yoga "trying to recreate the 'high' of an acid trip anytime they wish[ed]." Interviewed by the *New York Times*, scholar Thomas Robbins explained that yoga practitioners and psychedelic drug users "both usually expound a pantheistic view that everything in the universe is God. And both usually place a premium on the cultivation of an inner psychic state."[44] The transition between drugs and yoga became a part of accepted wisdom of the period.

Yoga, Spirituality, and The "Me Generation."

Both LSD and yoga seemed to offer people a way to move beyond the boundaries of the self to connect with the universe by turning inwards, rather than try to effect systemic change. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the self, the "personal," became one of the central ways in which social critics made sense of a society that seemed fractured beyond control. While many people turned to political action in the 1950s and 1960s, by the late 1960s and early 1970s many people internalized such political projects, this internalization led to an eventual abandonment of the politics, leaving in its wake a self-centered analysis that focused on personal, physical, and spiritual improvement.

In part, the success of the Ananda Village recognized this turn inward and championed the focus on the self, both in spirit and body, as a path to a better social order. Kriyananda advocated this view in his guidebook on intentional communities, "Cooperative Communities: How to Start One and Why"(1979) in which he reflected on

[43] Steven V. Roberts "Many Youths Are Abandoning Psychedelic Drugs ; Yoga and Urban Action Turn On Many Youths Who Have Turned Off to LSD," *New York Times*, April 26, 1970, accessed http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/119201934?accountid=7118.
[44] Ibid.

the mission and successes of the Ananda Village. In its promotional literature the Ananda Cooperative Village described its mission as such:

> While members of Ananda are followers of Yogananda, the work being done here has a universal application which cannot be limited to any one group of people. Our role is to help from genuinely spiritual communities--integrated environments where people of all ages can live harmoniously and consciously look within themselves for spiritual guidance --communities which are practical examples of 'plain living and God-thinking.'[45]

Kriyananda aspired to create an inclusive atmosphere where a variety of people could focus on their own spiritual growth in a relatively simple place. He counseled those interested in starting an intentional community that success "lies in a recognition of the fact that the mainspring of mature action is the inner man, not an outer order." Furthermore, "the more society becomes centralized in its power, the greater the need for individuals to seek their values (as opposed to their outer convenience) *within themselves*."[46] Kriyananda viewed Ananda, and similar communities, as potential havens from the stress and pressure of the outward world; an environment where an individual's needs truly mattered and shaped the operations of the community. Even though he emphasized the individual and was wary of the negative implications of a self-centered attitude, Kriyananda argued that "the need of the hour is for self-unfoldment - not as a selfish imposition on the universe (the "great God, EGO" of Ayn Rand) but simply as a

[45] N/D Ananda promotional material, folders 40-45, box 1, New Religious Movements Organizations: Vertical Files Collection, Center for the Study of New Religious Movements, Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA).
[46] Kriyananda, *Cooperative Communities: How to Start One and Why*, (1979), 5 accessed June, 11 2012 from http://www.kriyananda-communities.com.

private and deeply personal search for Self-realization."[47] Via this self-realization people could improve themselves with an ultimate goal to look outward.

Framing the self as a project has led some social theorists, according to Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, to define "the reflexive self" as the way in which the self becomes an undertaking "to be made, constructed, and endlessly refashioned through the life-cycle."[48] Additionally, this "reflexive self" integrated the body as the self, rather than the soul as the self, which "represent[ed] a definite reversal of the traditional Christian pattern in which the flesh was subordinated in the interests of the soul."[49] Within this view of the body and soul, yoga served as an appealing alternative in that the body and mind became the method through which a person could reach enlightenment. The postmodern condition of increasing fragmentation, destabilization, and potential alienation made a shift toward the seemingly solid state of corporality appear reassuring. The postmodern state offered an array of possibilities and refractions of ways of being and seeing at the same time as it unnerved.

Kriyananda recognized the stresses of the postmodern condition that Francois Lyotard described as such: "eclecticism is the degree zero of culture: one listens to reggae, watches a Western, eats McDonald's [sic] food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and retro clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a

[47] Ibid. As chapter 5 will show, lululemon did actually incorporate Ayn Rand's vision into its corporate interpretation of yoga.
[48] Quoted in Bryan S. Turner, "The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and its Perspectives," in Sarah Coakley, ed. *Religion and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 33.
[49] Ibid.

matter for TV games."[50] Although, one could add 'practice yoga' to Lyotard's list of cultural pastiche, Kriyananda argued that the type of yoga he taught, which honored people's own religious beliefs, was closer to a path that cleared out the clutter of postmodernity to find an internal anchor amid the chaos rather than simple cultural borrowing. Thus, a turn inward that focused on spiritual connection, physical practice, and a separation from a larger society defined Ananda Village as a responsive place for people disturbed by the emerging social conditions to seek answers.

Kriyananda responded to concerns of alienation, one of the negative results rising from the postmodern condition, by delineating a line between a focus on the self and isolation. He believed that isolation led to alienation, but that a focus on the self could lead to a deeper connection with the universe. Kriyananda adopted this approach from Yogananda's Self-Realization Fellowship instructions, which, as the name suggests, focused deeply on the self. Yogananda appealed to the desire for individual well-being and health. In his work, *Scientific Healing Affirmations*, he "offer[ed] affirmations and directions on how to use thoughts for one's own and others' benefits...emphasiz[ing] that it [was] the self who [does] the healing and not God, although the power to heal oneself or another [was] a gift from God."[51] In his teachings, Yogananda promoted self-effort, but also emphasized yielding to destiny, an appealing combination to a person looking for

[50] Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 76.
[51] Williamson, *Transcendent in America*, 62.

minimal active political or social engagement, but with a strong desire to improve the world in a nebulous fashion.[52]

This "new" vision of religion that incorporated a wide variety of spiritual organizations emphasized personal experience and direct contact with the divine. Enmeshed with the desire for spiritual experience was a belief in the power of psychological therapy as well as a bastardization of feminists' observation that the "personal is political." As feminists and other rights organizations focused on members' everyday challenges and personal obstacles in order to translate common experiences into social and political change, a less political and socially engaged version of the personal emerged in the notion that any personal decision could make a wide-sweeping political or social difference. As part of this personal movement, a large number of spiritual organizations sprung up in the Third Great Awakening of, what Tom Wolfe would call in 1976 the "Me Generation:"

> We are now—in the Me Decade—seeing the upward roll (and not yet the crest, by any means) of the third great religious wave in American history, one that historians will very likely term the Third Great Awakening. Like the others it has begun in a flood of *ecstasy,* achieved through LSD and other psychedelics, orgy, dancing (the New Sufi and the Hare Krishna), meditation, and psychic frenzy (the marathon encounter). This third wave has built up from more diverse and exotic sources than the first two, from therapeutic movements as well as overtly religious movements, from hippies and students of "psi phenomena" and Flying Saucerites as well as charismatic Christians.[53]

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[52] Despite the surface level of self-centeredness, Yogananda and Kriyananda did require a large commitment from their most devout followers. While on the surface they appeared to offer "instant karma," to quote John Lennon, Kriyananda believed that real freedom came through complete self-sacrifice to the guru and God.

[53] Tom Wolfe, The "Me" Decade and the Third Great Awakening" *New York,* August 23, 1976, accessed January 18, 2013, http://nymag.com/news/features/45938/index2.html.

The "Me Generation" followed an earlier moniker the "Now Generation" bestowed by *Time* magazine when they named the 1967 Man of the Year the "Man and Woman under 25." Ordained the most privileged and most educated demographic by the mass media that had shaped their childhoods, how could this cohort have avoided growing into a generation of people vastly interested in themselves? Often references to the "Me Generation" do not associate Wolfe's observations with the religious movements of the period that claimed to connect people to something larger than themselves by delving more deeply into their own psyche. One of the organizations that best captured the general mood of the self-centered, spiritual movement happened at Esalen in Big Sur, California. A cornerstone of Esalen's beliefs rested on theories of human potential, drawing inspiration from Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs that reached its apex in self-actualization, an appealing strategy in a time of economic abundance that once basic needs had been met, an individual could reach his or her highest potential.

Instead of a psychological approach, the Ananda Village used a blend of yoga and Western spirituality, however, many of its members turned to the Ananda Village because, in addition to a spiritual outlet, they wanted psychological solutions to their problems. The Ananda community's collective spiritual goal was "to intensify each devotee's spiritual life in the manner that yoga provides. The ultimate objective has been defined as Cosmic Consciousness, or awareness that each individual is a child of God and as such enjoys a direct relationship with the Deity."[54] The majority of the members pursuing a spiritual path became an answer to the "frustration[s], lack of meaning or

[54] Ball, *Ananda- Where yoga Lives*, 139.

purpose, or anxiety."[55] Members reported feeling disconnected from the aims of mainstream Americans and hoped to find a way to tap into a deeper part of their psyche that allowed them to feel connections to a community. The desire for connectedness did not blossom into a desire to take part in political or social action. As Norquist observed in the 1970s, "the trend, after joining Ananda, was to become more apolitical and classify oneself more as a 'yogi' than as a person concerned with the world, socially or politically."[56] The Ananda Village offered a depoliticized, deeply personal experience that allowed people to live with like-minded individuals with an understanding that everyone at Ananda would be focused on their own journey.

The Ananda members had the opportunity to choose from many possible paths among a range of other groups. As Wolfe's list above makes clear, yoga was not the only way in which American religion was reinvigorated during the 1970s: "an outpouring of enthusiasm and spiritual experimentation that ran the gamut...from New Right Christians to New Age seekers, students of the Book of Revelations and the Torah, the Bhagavad Gita and the I Ching."[57] Many people lumped yoga in with the New Age movements that included non-Western spiritual beliefs and supernatural phenomena. According to the *New Age Encyclopedia*, by 1971 New Age "had achieved a level of popularity" that allowed leaders to articulate a coherent New Age vision, though it lacked "any precise dogma or doctrine." These movements shared an emphasis on the individual, a

[55] Norquist, *Ananda Cooperative Village*, 91.
[56] Ibid., 89.
[57] Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*, (New York: The Free Press, 2002), 92.

separation from their families' religions, a desire for greater spirituality, and a belief in the transformative power of spirituality.[58] A desire for a spiritual experience and a dissatisfaction with Judeo-Christian practices led people to create and join new movements. At Ananda, most members came to the community with "a yearning for Truth, Love, or people on a similar spiritual path or group discipline, and the sense of 'feeling right' or 'in tune' with other people."[59] Finding a new spiritual community at Ananda, at least for Americans with a Christian upbringing, meant adopting whatever vestiges of a family religion one wanted to retain and use in a practice of kriya yoga. Kriyananda following Yogananda's teaching, worked to "revitalize Christianity" to teach "the original Christianity of Christ."[60] Yogananda would tell his audiences that "Jesus himself asked Babaki to send someone here [America] to teach you the science of Kriya Yoga, that people might learn to commune with God directly. I want to help you attain actual experience of Him, through your daily practice of Kriya Yoga."[61]

By relying on Christianity as an introduction to kriya yoga, Yogananda meant to speak to Americans in terms they would understand; however, while Kriyananda kept Christ in his messages, he recognized people's growing disenchantment with Christian traditions and departed from Yogananda's more enthusiastic embrace of Jesus Christ. Though some people declared "God to Be Dead" and others debated the effect of Vatican II, a general liberalization of religion did not mean Americans abandoned spirituality

[58] Ibid., 96-99.
[59] Norquist, *Ananda Cooperative Village*, 90.
[60] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 436.
[61] Ibid., 460.

altogether. A persistent impulse among a large number of Americans to seek spirituality remained robust in the U.S. Even the staid field of religious study that had lost faith with spiritual feelings, as expressed by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), rediscovered the possibility of "spiritual truth" in Peter Berger's *A Rumor of Angels* (1969). Berger offered an academic but deeply personal look at religious sentiment that reflected the renewed interest in direct spiritual encounter. More accessible and widely-read Richard Bach's surprisingly best-selling parable, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1970), encapsulated the "spiritual awakening" blossoming in the 1970s that was defined by "the personal experience of the transcendent, encouraged self-exploration and self-discovery, and preached resistance against established institutions."[62]

The resistance to established institutions and an emphasis on the self led to a changing understanding how yoga functioned in the United States. In addition to revitalization of traditional spiritual interest, interests in Asian religions had its largest resurgence in America since the nineteenth century. Kriyananda's Ananda Village and teaching based on Yogananda's work found new followers because of this expanding view of religious experience. At the Ananda Village they believed that "in all aspects of our life we like to keep central direction and community rules and regulations to a minimum, giving the individual maximum freedom to express his love and to serve in his own way."[63] In its promotional material, the Ananda Village emphasized individuality as

[62] Schulman, *The Seventies,* 79.
[63] N/D Ananda promotional material, folders 40-45, box 1, New Religious Movements Organizations: Vertical Files Collection, Center for the Study of New Religious Movements, Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA).

a key part of its ethos. They stated, "we feel at one with all people in tune with the spiritual revolution or new age that surrounds us. To truly bring this new age into being we all must work together, each according to his own personality, following slightly different paths which all lead to the same goal."[64] Despite Kriyananda's centralized leadership within the Ananda Village, he did not dictate explicit goals to his students or determine the minute details of their lives. He created the community in a democratic fashion that provided people with a minimally structured environment in which they could focus on their own personal relationship with God.

At Ananda, the self became a double-edged sword that required a person to not only indulge their spiritual interests, but face their imperfections in order to work toward improving themselves. Descriptions of the community promoted individualism, but warned that they, because of the fallibility of man, did not provide a perfect community, stating, "Ananda is no utopia...we know that there is no absolute perfection on this physical plane --for that one looks inside himself."[65] Ananda committed itself to helping people be their best selves, so they could then teach others. Even though Ananda focused on the development of the self, its leaders cautioned that the hardest part of life at Ananda was having to face oneself without the distractions of contemporary society. Despite this difficulty, the community believed "if you are willing to face your weaknesses constantly, to see every experience as a positive lesson and maintain devotion and surrender to your own inner consciousness, then for you, facing yourself is also the most

[64]Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

rewarding and worthwhile task."[66] By looking at the self in both its positive and negative aspects, people in the Ananda community hoped to work toward perfection in order to find God within themselves. Success in this work would result not only in an improved relationship with the divine, but would lead to an understanding through which community members "dissolve all sense of difference between us and them."[67] Thus, divisions between individuals and God would meld into one unified landscape, freeing people from prejudices and alienation. In this self-centered reflection lay the possibility of "true" religious experience and, optimistically, a path toward alternative means to understand the self and, possibly, the creation of alternative social structures that renegotiated capital and gender.

Anti-Consumerist Attitudes and a Search for Alternatives

Underlying young adults' increasing drug use, spiritual seeking, and the creation of new communities was a desire to find alternatives to what they saw as the overly materialistic, capitalist pursuits that defined "good living" in the U.S. Over-consumption began to embody the core problems of America in terms of values, environmental degradation, and oppressive domestic and work structures, which would destroy individuals and eventually the planet. A successful, if unorganized, campaign to position the U.S. free market in opposition to communists threats in the 1950s fueled a backlash in the late 1960s and early 1970s that led some people to seek alternatives in what they perceived as an unsullied realm of spirituality; however, from the perspective of spiritual

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

leaders like Kriyananda, these young adults were unprepared to abandon all of the vestiges of consumerism, leading Kriyananda to utilize capitalism and consumerism in ways that benefitted the Ananda Village.

Echoing the concerns and discontent her generation had regarding capitalism, actress Candice Bergen opined to Lewis Lapham in an interview about The Beatles' trip to the Maharishi: "everything [was] mass produced, everything a commodity - not only the cars and the clothes and the hair-dos, but also the ideas and the orgasms."[68] Similarly, Kriyananda wrote that "consumerism, elevated at it has been in modern times to the status of a moral law, sets aside as old-fashioned some of the fundamental teachings of the ages -as if the ability to build airplanes and TV sets qualified us to say that we know better" than great religious leaders about how people should live their lives.[69] Kriyananda founded the Ananda Village as a solution to the excess of consumption he perceived in the U.S., while at the same time he recognized the need for financial stability linked to the broader economic environment. His vision of conscientious capitalism relied on the community's needs to generate revenue while it challenged consumption's link to anxieties about alienation, unequal gender relations, and environmental destruction. Kriyananda, in response to contemporary concerns, used his interpretation of yoga to create a sustainable intentional community at the Ananda Village.

[68] Lapham, *With the Beatles,* 59.
[69] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 611.

Kriyananda chafed against the belief that "wisdom, fulfillment, and happiness can be mass-produced, like the parts of a radio,"[70] and declared that the pursuit of artificially manufactured pleasures made people feel alienated from others and themselves, resulting in a life of nervousness, fearfulness, and unhappiness.[71] Kriyananda believed this in part because of his background in renunciation, but his ability to attract members to the Ananda Village spoke to a more widespread dissatisfaction with the consumer lifestyle through which he could expand his opinions on the material world. Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* (1960) became one of the most influential works that spoke to the growing discontent among white Americans with capitalism. Goodman became an inspirational figure to youth in revolt during the 1960s as *Growing Up Absurd,* and his numerous essays and articles that followed, argued that "only a decentralized society that did not worship an ever-expanding GNP could foster satisfaction of authentic human longings for love, patriotism, work, faith, honor, and community."[72] Furthermore, in the eclectic essay *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life (*1947, 1960) Goodman and his brother Percival agreed with contemporary critics: "We spend our money for follies, that our leisure does not revive us, that our conditions of work are unmanly and our beautiful American classlessness is degenerating into a static bureaucracy; our mass arts are beneath contempt; our prosperity breeds insecurity."[73] After decades of penning criticisms of consumer culture, the ideas of Goodman and his

[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004),133.
[73] Percival Goodman and Paul Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), accessed January 18, 2013, http://archive.org/stream/communitasmeanso010751mbp/communitasmeanso010751mbp_djvu.txt.

peers began to resonate with teenagers and college students across America. In *The Greening of America* (1970), Charles Reich found his students at Yale expressing the capitalist ennui Goodman had observed fomenting in the 1950s. Reich admired that large numbers of young adults "saw how empty and unfulfilling middle-class life could become. They recognized that the goals of money, ambition and power were a trap."[74] In a profile on the early formation of the Ananda Village the *Los Angeles Times* questioned why people wanted to form a commune, asking, "what are the pressures in modern society that send this generation, so lovingly weaned on Hot Wheels and Barbie Dolls, groping after new lifestyles?"[75] These young adults, according to the *Los Angeles Times* reporter, "having been through the shiny glass doors of the business world, have retreated, disillusioned and frustrated."[76] This dissatisfaction with capitalism led to a variety of attempts to transform, in myriad combinations, society, and the self. Even articles appearing in *Time* magazine embraced the wistful poetics of young adults' anti-consumerism: "Indeed, it could be argued that in their independence of material possessions and their emphasis on peacefulness and honesty, hippies lead considerably more meaningful lives than the great majority of their fellow citizens."[77] As this *Time* reporter recognized, young adults dissatisfied with the consumerist center of American society sought alternatives in the hope that their conceptions about the spiritual East would recenter their lives away from the ceaseless acquisitions of consumer culture.

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[74] Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 111.
[75] Beronius, "The 'New Naturalism' at Ananda Commune."
[76] Ibid.
[77] Quoted in Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling*, 112.

Engaging with the growing anti-consumer literature, Kriyananda observed that members of contemporary society committed themselves to the belief "that the more one owns, and that the more one experiences of outward diversity, entertainment, and excitement, the happier one will be."[78] While Kriyananda criticized over-consumption, he did not reject participation in the larger capitalist system and created at Ananda a community based on yogic principles but also reliant on consumption and capitalist pursuits. Despite Kriyananda's apparent disgust with the worship of consumerism in the United States, he also states in his autobiography: "It is not that what we have nowadays is wrong. The solution lies not in reverting to primitivism, or to any other culture that imagination may cast for us in a romantic glow...What is needed is a change in our *priorities*."[79] Kriyananda refocused Ananda Villagers' priorities on consumerism in service of spiritual pursuit. He did this out of practical necessity, believing that people moving from urban areas to a remote intentional community would not survive an extreme change in their lifestyles. Kriyananda's view of communes was largely in step with B.F. Skinner's influential book on intentional communities, *Walden Two* (1948).[80]

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[78] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 610.

[79] Ibid., 611-612 his emphasis.

[80] Skinner wrote *Walden Two,* in response to his concerns that people returning from World War II would return uninspired lives. Skinner was out of step with the concerns of veterans many of whom were excited to take advantage of the economic opportunities that awaited them at home. Rather than desire "an experimental attitude toward life" having spent the past fifteen years in an economic depression and a major war Americans longed for security and comfort, not another challenge. *Walden Two* garnered tepid reviews and equally weak sales until the late 1960s, when a new generation discovered it. By 1970, 600,000 copies had been sold. One of the primary goals of *Walden Two* was to lessen people's workloads so that they may pursue creative leisure. The book did not encourage free love, but free affection, and encouraged marriages to occur at age sixteen. It also championed equality of the sexes. Skinner based his community on psychological tenets of behavioralism, which relied on observation and directed effort to improve behavior. Skinner squarely believed that nurture ruled the psychology of most people and that through positive reinforcement behavior, attitudes could be improved, creating a better and more just society. See Robert

Like Skinner, Kriyananda agreed that people's desire for immediate gratification, a naive view of agrarianism, and lack of money led most communes to fail.[81] To combat those failings, Kriyananda encouraged all members to work, save their own money, and pay fees or contribute in other material ways to the maintenance of the community. By doing these things Kriyananda allowed his followers to maintain their economic independence even in a close-knit, remote community.

Kriyananda and the leaders in the Ananda community also included the pursuit of business as part of living a spiritual life. Often people who came to the Ananda Village wanted to make a better life free of the social and economic restrictions they felt U.S. culture fostered. Yet when they arrived at Ananda they found that Kriyananda framed all of the capitalist work undertaken at Ananda as an integral part of karma yoga. In a benign example to his followers, Kriyananda explained: "Karma yoga does not necessarily consist of building hospitals or doing works that people commonly label 'religious'...If, for example, one's own nature impels him to work in the soil, gardening may be a more important [liberating]...action for him than preaching to multitudes."[82] While Kriyananda picked the benign example of gardening in this particular teaching, in other places he and his followers hailed the businessmen of the time as potential holy men who could positively change the curse of society: "Business can aid in social change more than any other institution in our society (except enlightened religion) because

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Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1993) and Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*.

[81] Richard Todd, "'Walden Two': Three? Many More?" *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 15, 1970, accessed http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/119022711?accountid=7118, 229.

[82] Ball, *Ananda: Where Yoga Lives*, 147.

business must respond to the desires of the consumer in order to survive."[83] Once again, practitioners of yoga found it necessary to look to businessmen and capitalism in order to spread their spiritual message, and, while the admixture of capital and religion has always existed, its central role at the Ananda Village in the 1960s and 1970s, when most people perceived yoga and intentional communities as a disconnected, hermetically-sealed haven, made the teachings particularly striking. Relying on the trope of the mystical, spiritual East as opposed to the harried, modern West, yoga teachers of the period fixed yoga above material needs, creating an apparent contradiction when yoga worked within, and often succeeded, with an emphasis on business.

Despite the Ananda members' focus on individual spirituality, the community actively sought to conduct business with people outside of Ananda. In "Producing an Income," two community members Jyotish (John Novak) and Binay (John Preston) told their audience about the importance of business to the Ananda community. The two men linked business to their guru's teaching and instructed Ananda residents that they had an obligation to participate in business for the good of the community. Quoting management "guru" Peter Drucker, they exhorted "if archangels, instead of businessmen, sat in directors' chairs, they would still have to be concerned with profitability despite their total lack of personal interest in making profits."[84] Here, the leaders of Ananda worked to convince their followers that dropping out of the economic system entirely was not an option. Leaders at Ananda recognized that in order to succeed they had to play by

[83] "Producing an Income," folders 40-45, box 1, New Religious Movements Organizations: Vertical Files Collection, Center for the Study of New Religious Movements, Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA).
[84] Ibid.

the rules of capitalism, not so that they could be profitable, but so that they could continue to pursue their spiritual works. Thus at Ananda businessmen became "the stewards of resources," "a sacred duty" of which the community members should feel blessed to be a part. Furthermore, the need to have a meeting about producing income spoke to an underlying uneasiness regarding the marriage of capitalism and yoga. Members of the community wanted to escape, not worship, business, and many hoped to find in yoga communities an anti-modern, anti-capitalist oasis in the midst of the United States.

The business-focused conversations held at Ananda translated into action. The industries at Ananda, particularly those that capitalized on larger New Age trends, flourished, holding a "monopoly" on incense and oil in the area, as well as a "jewelry combine" sold in "such San Francisco stores as Macy's, City of Paris, Montgomery Ward and the Emporium."[85]

> Ananda now presents many of the features of a well-established village: a thriving farm, dairy, and apiary; various businesses, privately as well as community-owned; "how-to-live" schools for children from nursery school through high school; an apprentice program for non-members wishing to learn skills in a cooperative community setting; a market that sells our own produce; a car repair shop; a fledgling restaurant; a publications building and print shop; a construction company that has the reputation for building the finest homes in Nevada County; a cabinet shop; hand-crafted goods; music lessons; and our own singing group, the Gandharvas (meaning Celestial Musicians)....We have a successful health food store, called Earth Song, in Nevada City, and a just-starting craft shop named Mountain Song. We also have a new radio program, "Pathways to Superconsciousness," five days a week in San Francisco, and another program weekly in Nevada City.[86]

[85] Beronius, "The 'New Naturalism' at Ananda Commune."
[86] Kriyananda, *Cooperative Communities,* 71.

The Ananda Village became a model for running an industry, not just for yogis, but for other communes as well. Ananda members felt that their spiritual path allowed them to anticipate and capitalize on the growing interest in New Age-ism and yoga. Capitalizing on New Age interests meant not only appealing to individuals' spiritual needs, but also responding to their worries about the environmental effects of consumer society. Environmentalism in the 1960s and 1970s shifted from concerns about preserving and conserving natural resources in the form of untouched wilderness, toward a fear of technology and widespread industrial destruction of the environment that affected everyday living.[87] Kriyananda's inclusion of capitalist pursuits at the Ananda Village was a success. By the late 1980s, the Ananda Village grossed approximately $3.5 million dollars annually and "control[ed] 35 businesses, including a health food store and restaurant, a general contractor, publishing enterprises, a health clinic, a public relations concern and a computer product maker."[88] For Kriyananda, labor for the sake of material

[87] Concerned about the environmental impact materialism and the creation of deleterious advancements in science both in terms of domestic and military application, Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* (1962) about the environmental degradation happening around her. Opening her book with a quote from and dedication to Albert Schweitzer, "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth," Carson's ominous portrayal of a devastated earth reached far beyond the mere publication of her book to spawn the environmental movement of the 1970s. The overarching message of the dangers of chemicals, the lack of government oversight, and individuals' irresponsible behavior with such chemicals came to inform young people in the early 1970s to look for alternative solutions to a broken system. Overall, the counterculture unnerved by "the regimentation and dehumanization they saw in the world made by standard brands, multinational corporations, and computer printouts" sought ways to reclaim the environment and personal autonomy from larger, more powerful institutions. Robert Gottlieb "The Sixties Rebellion" *Forcing the Spring* 81-114 An analysis of Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969) in Robert Ellwood's *The 60s Spiritual Awakening,* 192.

[88] "Commune Flourishes, as does Neighborliness," *New York Times (1923-Current File),* September 1, 1988, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/110498449?accountid=7118.; Ball, *Ananda - Where Yoga Lives*, 174.

gain signaled misguided pursuits, but for the practical service of spiritual development, capitalism was welcome.[89]

Part of the spiritual development linked to capitalism at Ananda related to a desire to foster positive relationships with their neighbors, as well as attract new, potential members. On one hand, an effort by members to work outside of the community could be seen as a sign of neighborliness. Efforts to be respectful and engage community members in Nevada City did not go unnoticed. In 1982, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported a "peaceful coexistence" between Ananda and its neighbors for fourteen years, and noted that most neighbors agreed that Ananda had brought few problems to the area in part because of their beliefs: "Liquor and drugs are outlawed on the compound and strictly vegetarian diets are followed. Marriage is becoming the accepted way of life, but the monastic life is still encouraged. Homosexuality is frowned upon."[90] On the other hand, the effort to go out in the community can be viewed as a recruitment tool for new members. In a study of recruitments into new religious sects and cults, Stark and Bainbridge found that interpersonal bounds with people made it more likely that a person would be receptive to joining a new group if they knew a member in the group. For example, they found that members of the Unification Church, commonly and pejoratively referred to as "Moonies" because of the suspicion that they were a cult, had difficulty expanding their group until they "found ways to connect with other newcomers to San

[89] Dave Carter, "Commune's Fight to Become a City," *San Francisco Chronicle* January 4, 1982.

Francisco and develop serious relationships with them did recruitment resume."[91] The Ananda Cooperative benefitted from a general interest in yoga that they could leverage into an interest in their work. A large portion of Ananda's exposure came through yoga classes held in cities and in retreats led at the Village. Often people would find their way to Ananda through the recommendation of a yoga teacher.

Overall, Kriyananda and his followers critiqued consumer culture but recognized a need for the group's participation in the local community so that the organization could maintain certain standards of living, participate in productive labor, build relationships with other population, and recruit new members to their organization. Rather than ascribe to a transcendent, idealized version of spiritual life that had gained popularity at some intentional communities, Ananda Village remained very concerned with the quotidian needs of its organization and its members, even as the outside world cast them as anti-capitalists. Similarly, Kriyananda approached issues of gender and sexuality at the Ananda Village with a mildly progressive view, that maintained traditional ideas about heterosexuality and gender rolse even as he challenged gendered ideas about God.

Gender and Sexuality at the Ananda Village

Another approach to combatting the general concerns surrounding the potential entrapment of consumer culture was to challenge mainstream definitions of gender roles and domestic arrangements. At the Ananda Village, Kriyananda held relatively conservative attitudes about sexuality; similar to his view about drugs and capitalism, he

[91] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *American Journal of Sociology*, 85 no. 6, 1376-1395 (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, May 1980), accessed January 28, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778383, 1379.

believed maintaining conditions in which people had been reared would help stabilize the community. At the same time, he adopted an expansive and androgynous view of God that he hoped would dissipate sexual desire. In her study of the SRF, scholar Lola Williamson found that "In prayers, God is addressed in many forms, both male and female. In fact, Yogananda had a special affinity for God as the Divine Mother."[92] As in previous movements discussed in this dissertation, the mutable gender of God appealed to people looking for an alternative to a bureaucratic, patriarchal religion; but unlike earlier spiritual movements at Ananda, this appealed to men as much as women. Even more interesting was how the relationship between god and guru blurred. In terms of the relationship with Yogananda, one of his disciples vowed in her prayers "Divine Mother, from now on I will love only Thee. In beholding him [Yogananda], I will see Thee alone."[93] Here Yogananda becomes the Divine Mother incarnate, bending understandings of gender identity in terms of spiritual relationships with God. General social movements called into question the behavior of a variety of institutions in the United States led by white, Christian men; if the people in charge of the system were wrong, perhaps a more open and fluid spirituality could offer an alternative frame of mind. A key part of that reframing was an interrogation of gender roles in the 1960s and 1970s.

One of the key ideas that Kriyananda took from Yogananda's teaching was that students should strive to see God in members of the opposite sex to disarm sexual desire. Kriyananda came to believe that "for only by deep, divine respect for one another can

[92] Williamson, *Transcendent in America*, 61.
[93] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 255.

men and women win final release from the magnetic attraction that draws them to seek fulfillment in outer, not in inner, *divine* union."[94] Thus, a true understanding of the self and God relied on an inward turn that transcended corporality and sexuality. Creating equality among the sexes through a divine relationship did not serve overt political ends, rather it functioned as a way in which followers not practicing celibacy could mitigate their sexual desires on their path to enlightenment.

While Kriyananda allowed married and unmarried couples at the Ananda Village, his attitudes about sex were conservative. Having practiced abstinence for most of his adult life as a renunciant, he, like his Master, approached sex with caution. In a letter to one of his followers Kriyananda wrote: "Sex is undeniably one of the strongest instincts of human nature. Because of its very strength, however, it can take precedence over finer feelings and perceptions, making it more difficult to develop such refinement. Moreover, sexuality makes great demands on one's energy." Based on this belief, Kriyananda counseled "that one realize that excessive indulgence is debilitating, especially spiritually. Infrequent enjoyment (moderation, in other words) is permitted and should be an act of joy and love, never of shame, if one is ever to get out of his lower joy into higher joy."[95]

While Kriyananda preached that sex should be infrequently enjoyed within the confines of a marriage, or at the very least a committed relationship, he also reflected that Americans had unreasonable expectations about what a marriage should be and why over time married people found life at Ananda difficult. Though he did not enumerate what

[94] Ibid., 277.
[95] Kriyananda, *In Devine Fellowship*, 68-69.

those expectations were, he went on to say that maybe "this new cooperative movement will be able to evolve new, acceptable, and equally rewarding attitudes toward marriage that will make a more open relationship to a broader 'family' both possible and desirable."[96] Kriyananda argued that marriage, during Yogananda's time, blocked efforts to from "world-brotherhood colonies" based on the teaching of the SRF that a kind of worship of marriage and the nuclear family had taken root after the Great Depression, followed by widespread wealth after World War II that had parents focusing on "us four and no more." This attitude made it difficult, if not impossible, for families to match the levels of personal sacrifice required of a truly spiritual life.

While Kriyananda did not advocate for a radical political action in terms of gender equality or sexual liberation, he did recognize the historical conditions that limited women's abilities to achieve the highest levels of spiritual attainment. One element of seeing God in the opposite sex was the recognition that women and men could achieve the highest spiritual potential. Kriyananda told his followers that "the barring of women from taking *sannyas* [the life stage dedicated to renouncement]...has no basis in the eternal truths propounded by India's Scriptures. In no age have women been denied the highest spiritual attainments. Their non-acceptance into the Swami order was based on purely transitory sociological considerations."[97] By promoting divinity within individuals and encouraging men and women to take *sannyas*, Kriyananda sought to

[96] Ibid., 174-175.
[97] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 568.

correct a socially constructed spiritual inequality that unfairly barred women from access to a life devoted to the worship and teaching of God.[98]

In his early devotion to Yogananda, Kriyananda embraced the more pressing concern of renunciation. Where Yogananda argued that this was a life for monks and nuns, Kriyananda believed that it could also be a path for entire households, believing that renunciation helped the resolve of all devotees. For Kriyananda, renunciation meant to "relinquish the clinging attitude of beggar toward things, places, people, experiences - in short, the limitations of this world - and to offer oneself constantly at the feet of Infinity."[99] For Kriyananda anyone could achieve this by a change of attitude, but that divorcing oneself as much as possible from society facilitated this task. Ultimately, more than any other type of renunciation, Kriyananda agreed with Yogananda that the goal was inner, mental purity by "making your heart a hermitage."[100] This created a compelling and to some, disturbing, call to abandon family members and material gain. Kriyananda struck a balance by allowing families to live at the Ananda Village, but also pushed them toward a vision of more monastic living.

Kriyananda's interpretation of gender within his spiritual teachings reflected the sociological and historical conditions in which he exited. The progress of second wave feminism highlighted not only the variety of inequalities and injustices women faced in

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[98] For all of the overtures to abstinence and androgyny, Kriyananda was brought to trial in 1996 by four former Ananda residents for abusing his spiritual authority to persuade them to have sex with him. In the San Mateo County Superior Court, Anne-Marie Bertolucci the main plaintiff accused Kriyananda of "the creation of an environment hostile to women and as a mechanism for the sexual exploitation of women." Kriyananda was found guilty of the charges. Erik Espe, "The Search for Truth at Ananda" *Palo Alto Weekly* February 28, 1996 Col. XVII No. 43 accessed http://www.anandauncovered.com/Materiali/Testi%20Sito/Inthepress.pdf.

[99] Kriyananda, *The Path*, 270.

[100] Ibid., 274.

the United States, but also helped to expand the conversation regarding the potentially corrosive effect that prescriptive, stereotypical gender roles could have on both women and men. Young men and women bristled under gender roles they found increasingly restrictive and artificial, rendering Kriyananda's call for a more androgynous and 'authentic' existence appealing to his followers. As men and women challenged ideas about gender, a body of literature on masculinity grew in the 1970s in response to feminist literature.[101] Most authors criticized the "masculine value system" which had grabbed hold of American men following World War II. Masculinity as a category did not ring true to the lived experiences of real men. The so-called New Age man participating in yoga, attempting to sublimate sexual desire and striving toward an androgynous existence, revolted against the scripted masculinity of mainstream America. In the 1970s, the complexities of gender as an imitation were not fully explored: "Authors complained about the restrictiveness of the male role and said, for instance, 'some of us are searching for new ways to work that will more fully express ourselves rather than our learned desire for masculinity they were clearly assuming that there is an inner "self" separate from, and sometimes opposed to, the motives or behaviors that form

[101] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies that Matter,* (New York: Routledge, 1994) significantly changed the theoretical conversation about gender. Butler decisively divorced gender from biology when she argued that gender rather than being an expression of actions was actually a performance that "produced retroactively the illusion that there was an inner gender core." The example that stood out to most in Butler's work was of the drag performance and that a man in drag is performing femininity, but her real meaning has more nuanced in that she the drag performance is an imitation of an imitation; in Butler's own words: "drag imitates the imitative structure of gender, revealing gender itself as imitation." The New Age man participating in yoga, attempting to sublimate sexual desire, to strive towards an androgynous existence revolts against the scripted masculinity of mainstream America. Judith Butler, "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification" in Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, eds. *Constructing Masculinity*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), ebook, accessed http://books.google.com/books?id=aX2-_kEH3c4C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

the package of "masculinity".'"[102] Rejecting or reinterpreting masculinity, however, remained a fraught undertaking. As Barbara Ehrenreich states, "The notions of success, masculinity and being a good (i.e. sole) provider were still too tightly intertwined for men to give up the last without compromising the first two. For anyone so tempted, the cautionary example of the Beats was still vivid - men who had failed to free themselves from their burdens only to be labeled failures and faggots."[103] Certainly, some authors did label men participating in 1960s and 1970s alternative cultures as failures. Patricia Sexton writing in The Feminized Male (1969) clung to a definition of masculinity that relied on naturalized categories of sex roles and was hostile to "the 'visibly feminized' soft men of the new left and counter-culture ('a new lumpen leisure-class of assorted hippies, homosexuals, artistic poseurs, and "malevolent blacks"').[104] This kind of hostility toward expanding the possibility of gendered experiences made it challenging for men to abandon gender precepts they had coming into the Ananda Village. Typically, this difficulty led to people in the community to maintain the gender dynamics in which they had been socialized. No one prescribed roles, as Kriyananda said, "individuals are not assigned roles and there are no specific male or female roles. If they are meant to be,

[102] Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," *Theory and Society*, 14 no. 5 September 1985, accessed http://www.springerlink.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/content/hr203gr3w74600r0/fulltext.pdf 566.http://www.springerlink.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/content/hr203gr3w74600r0/fulltext.pdf 566

[103] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment, (*Norwell, MA: Anchor Press, 1987), 103.

[104] Carrigan, et al., "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," 561-562.

roles and people usually find each other."[105] The roles people felt they were meant for typically meant men and women falling into similar labor patterns as the wider world.

The ways in which Kriyananda began and ran the Ananda Village deepen and complicate the stereotypical and superficial understandings of how a yoga community operated in the 1960s and 1970s. Kriyananda focused on spirituality and moderated his adaptation of the Self-Realization Fellowship to fit both the critiques and functions of mainstream American society. By framing the community's economic needs in spiritual language, he positioned Ananda as part of the counterculture without entirely abandoning indispensable material benefits. The overall effect of this should remind us that yoga in the 1960s and 1970s did not exist in an anti-consumerist, Shangri-La that was later co-opted by corporations, but that this time period was part of a continual reinterpretation of yoga that engaged squarely with American consumer culture. Even as yoga slowly gained a wider audience it remained attached to a kind of New Age mysticism for a large part of the 1980s and 1990s, despite the increasing prominence of more physically rigorous practices such as Bikram Choudhury's Bikram yoga and Pattabhi Jois' Ashtanga yoga. As the next chapter will explore, this began to shift in the late 1990s as yoga exploded in popularity and developed into a multibillion dollar industry.

[105] N/D Ananda promotional material, folders 40-45, box 1, New Religious Movements Organizations: Vertical Files Collection, Center for the Study of New Religious Movements, Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA).

Chapter Five: lululemon athletica and Eat, Pray, Love*: Constructing Popular Yoga in the 1990s and 2000s*

Yoga found pockets of popularity throughout the twentieth century, but by the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, yoga arrived as a mainstream part of American culture. Madonna practiced yoga to keep her sanity and her lithe dancer's body. Sting allegedly practiced Tantrik yoga for marathon sex with his partner. The *New York Times*'s style section runs a virtual constant stream of articles about a variety of places and ways to practice yoga: yoga as a competitive sport, yoga on hikes, yoga at hotels, yoga on planes, doga (yoga for dogs) and, even, smoga (yoga for smokers).[1] In as many instances of adapting yoga to different situations and lifestyles emerged, other yoga practitioners clung tightly to a particular lineage (including but not limited to, B.K.S. Iyengar's yoga, Bikram Choudhury's yoga, and John Friend's Anusara yoga) of which they policed the boundaries of the practice to maintain what they perceive as its authenticity and ensure the practice retains a veneer of timeless wisdom that transcends historical circumstances. In addition to the faddish yoga reported in the media and the more long-standing schools of yoga, one of the most visible articulations of yoga in American popular culture today has simply become the lycra-clad women stretching and gossiping about their love lives in a gym or studio setting: an image that has pervaded television shows with female characters and films marketed to women.[2]

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[1] There are so many yoga articles that the Times has curated a total collection of their writing about yoga as a Times Topic, which can be found here: http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/y/yoga/index.html?s=oldest&

[2] See episodes of shows and films including: *Ugly Betty*, *Sex in the City*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *Couples Retreat*, *He's Just Not That Into Yo*u, and *27 Dresses*.

Throughout the history of yoga in the United States, its teachers have adapted yoga to address relevant American concerns, such as universalism, sexuality, the "organization man" and the Cold War, or creating alternative communities. Similarly, the popular understanding of yoga that developed in the 1990s and 2000s also responded to its environment. In a departure from earlier chapters, this narrative explores the latest incarnation of yoga in this period—an international, North American-based yoga wear company, lululemon, and the best-selling memoir *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006) by Elizabeth Gilbert. While earlier chapters focused on individual yoga teachers and the communities that they created, this chapter examines a corporate mission and a woman's memoir about traveling abroad and practicing yoga. This approach is more appropriate in a chapter dealing with yoga in an increasingly global and abstract socioeconomic environment. Even though lululemon and Gilbert's memoir (and its subsequent Hollywood adaptation), focus on different aspects of popular yoga -- lululemon highlights physicality and athleticism, while Gilbert champions a meditative and spiritual type of yoga -- both counsel women to follow the paths they have created in order for an individual to become his or her best self. Furthermore, despite differences in means, the best self in both of these cases is an idealized, neoliberal woman, focused on the perfection of the self as the highest personal and social good. While this dissertation has discussed historical examples with similar attitudes about the reason to practice yoga, the yoga developing in the 1990s and 2000s differs significantly in scale, corporatization, and range of dissemination.

Between 2000 and 2008 the number of yoga participants in the U.S. alone increased from 3 million to 15.8 million.[3] This statistic demonstrates the tremendous popularity of yoga, but does not address the reasons why yoga resonated with an ever-larger group of people at this time. As in the past, increasing interest in yoga in the 1990s has been attributed to celebrities and wealthy people publicly discussing their practices. Madonna's reinvention of herself as a yoga practitioner and borrowing from an array of other "exotic" Asian and Middle Eastern cultural practices became a focal point of popular discussions on yoga. Even as her participation in yoga piqued people's interest, or at least curiosity, about yoga, Madonna faced criticism that has been cast on women doing yoga since the 1890s that, "an inner sea change wrought by an exercise regime may seem no more than the luxury of a rich woman bored enough to keep looking for something, despite having it all."[4] In a 1998 interview with Madonna, journalist Ann Powers suggested that instead of simply being one wealthy woman's indulgence, Madonna's interest in yoga indicated "the uncertain maturity of the 1980's yuppie class. A generation that spent its young adulthood pursuing self-centered ambitions now faces questions of purpose and fulfillment."[5] Powers recognized the "something" people sought in the 1990s triggered a turn to the East, but did not interrogate the ways in which purpose and fulfillment, as used here, remained defined by self-centered ambition that

[3] "Yoga Journal Releases 2012 Yoga in America Market Study." *PR Newswire*, December 5, 2012, accessed January 16, 2013 http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/yoga-journal-releases-2012-yoga-in-america-market-study-182263901.html.
[4] Ann Powers "New Tune for the Material Girl: I'm Neither" *New York Times* March 1, 1998, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/01/arts/pop-view-new-tune-for-the-material-girl-i-m-neither.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm.
[5] Ibid.

took on a mask of purpose and profundity because it borrowed from Eastern spirituality. In contrast to Powers' interpretation of Madonna's yoga practice, scholar Angelina Malhorta-Singh viewed this cultural appropriation as a more serious form of exploitation:

> Brownsploitation is a hot ticket in middle America, particularly with middle-class teenagers drawn to the pick-a-spirituality approach championed by their MTV icons. At last year's video awards, Madonna (in her post-Eva Peron guise) paired Brahminical forehead markings, bridal jewelry and heavy-duty mehendi with a nipple-baring shirt. (The World Vaishnava Council was apoplectic, But the community at large was silent, and there was no doubt a run on tikas in Kansas).[6]

What Malhota-Singh observed at this cultural moment was not profound spiritual growth, but a thoughtless and haphazard collecting of spiritual symbols by celebrities who were then copied by teenagers wearing tikas and mehendi, with even less cultural awareness. In *Simulacra and Simulation,* Baudrillard posits, in a larger discussion of Western faith, "But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum….[It is] never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference."[7] The mass appropriation of abstracted symbols of Indian spirituality becomes entirely weightless. In addition to draining spiritual meaning from religious symbols, other critics suggest that celebrity-inspired Eastern spirituality in the West replaces faith and personal growth in entirely selfish pursuits. Vijay Prashad's analysis of Deepak Chopra, a favorite Eastern

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[6] Angela Malhotra-Singh, "Brownsploitation! From France to India, American Cultural Imperialism Goes Eastward," *India Currents* 13.3 (June 30, 1999), http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/194649951?accountid=7118.
[7] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

Guru to the West, suggests that Chopra offered up an Eastern reinterpretation of Dale Carnegie, counseling Americans: "Do not struggle, he says; work hard and be as self-interested, self-indulgent, and selfish as possible. If there are problems in the United States, he tells us, they are to be located within the deep structures of an essentialized human personality and not in the institutions and social structures of our world."[8] In Prashad's assessment, the new ethos of Eastern spirituality goes even deeper into self-centered spirituality than previous popular incarnations of yoga. In Prashad's estimation, spirituality is not just about realization, but self-indulgence and selfishness without any concern for others.

Celebrity endorsement aside, one of the most significant factors in the popularity of lululemon, *Eat, Pray, Love,* and yoga in general needs to be grounded in its contemporary moment, which has largely been regarded as a high period of globalization that began following the collapse of the Soviet Union.[9] The yoga that emerged in this period of globalization rested on the core values of neoliberalism, embraced unabashedly by lululemon and more subtly in *Eat, Pray, Love*, that emphasized free market capitalism unregulated by the state with an emphasis on individualism and with less concern for community development. Scholar Ruth Williams argues that *Eat, Pray, Love* as a brand "perpetuates a relationship between empowerment and consumption that produces women as neoliberal spiritual subjects," whose dreams are yoked to "the engine of

[8] Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 48.
[9] The word globalization came into use in 1961, but as Michael Denning has argued the understanding of globalization as a web of communication and interaction begins to move faster following the collapse of the Soviet Union because of changes in technology, but also in a rush to redefine understandings of geopolitical relationships. See: Michael Denning, "Globalization and Culture: Process and Epoch," in *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London; New York: Verso, 2004).

capital."[10] In order to "be your best self" various corporations suggest that women need to dress, act, and harbor aspirations in ways that align with capitalist missions of these companies. Yoga, in the late twentieth century, increasingly became a spiritual industry involving expensive retreats, overpriced lycra clothing, and expensive private studios. This importance of acquiring consumer goods to attain a more spiritual existence leads to what Williams calls, "a depoliticized outlook that ignores oppressive social realities in favor of a therapeutically tinged focus on her self. "[11] The lore of lululemon and the personal writings of Elizabeth Gilbert in *Eat, Pray, Love* encourage women to focus on themselves before all else, and only after achieving personal perfection can a women turn her concerns to her broader community. This emphasis on developing the "therapeutically tinged" self emerges as a superficially pious process of consumption. As Pierre Bourdieu suggests, all consumption is productive in as much as it reveals the badges of class that influence all areas of everyday life. The distinction of wearing lululemon clothing, of reading *Eat, Pray, Love*, or, better yet, following Gilbert's lead and traveling to an ashram mark women not as crass consumers, but as women whose consumption marks them as worldly, more enlightened, and wealthy: a woman on the path to perfection.[12]

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[10] Ruth Williams, "*Eat Pray Love*: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject," *The Journal of Popular Culture,* (2011): 4, accessed January 16, 2013, doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00870.x. Quoting Nancy Fraser, "Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History" *New Left Review* 56 (2009): 110-111.
[11] Ruth Williams " *Eat Pray Love*:" 4. Quoting Nancy Fraser, "Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History" *New Left Review* 56 (2009) 110-111.
[12] I am inclined toward this cynical interpretation; however, I recognize that individuals within these structure may indeed have less problematic relationships with yoga than the broader picture may portray.

While followers of Devi in the 1950s looked to become more efficient and cope with the realities of "brain work" and the military-industrial complex, and members of the Ananda Village in the 1960s and 1970s strove to create alternative, but accessible, ways of living, people in the late 1990s and early 2000s found themselves immersed in a world focused on interconnectivity via technology in global economics, but lacked connectedness in their daily experiences. Perceptions of the "post-"American landscape fostered a feeling of fragmentation from labor and society. At the same time, India, which had struggled to emerge as an economically and politically strong global player after partition, by the end of the twentieth century took on the moniker "sleeping elephant" or "roaring tiger" in Western business news; India was now on the cusp of being an economic threat to or opportunity for the West. In some ways, the appeal and development of yoga in the 1990s and 2000s in America emerged as a response to a development of India as a global economic player, the increasing alienation of white-collar workers, and the disembodiment of post-capitalism.

By the late 1990s, changing technologies in travel, communication, and the functions of neoliberal economics within an increasingly globalized society resulted in an increasing circulation of cultural images, leading more cultural critics to examine the Western adoption of Eastern beliefs in the context of a postcolonial and racialized discourse. While earlier yogis appropriated foreign culture, the contemporary critics of those yogis did not interrogate or criticize Western yogis on grounds of cultural appropriation; those critics were far more concerned about the corrosive potential of Eastern spirituality on American beliefs. By the 1990s, scholars became much more

concerned with the implications of Indian cultural appropriation, citing a collusion of cultural forces that gave way to a renewed Western interest in India. Virinder S. Kalra and John Huynyk argued that India's increasing role in the global economy, or what they call "multinational capitalist exploitation," led to increased circulation of Indian and Western culture in "media and cultural industries worldwide."[13] Primary attention to this phenomenon has focused on the economics of outsourcing jobs to India due to factors such as new telecommunications, increased demand for tech support surrounding Y2K, and the availability of a large and inexpensive English-speaking workforce in India.[14] What that focus misses and what Kalra and Huynyk began to explore is how the particularities of these economic exchanges inform cultural exchanges.

It is worth taking a small detour to briefly explain the political and economic changes happening in India from the 1980s and the 1990s in order to better understand why, of the many potential material and cultural exports available in India, yoga became one of the most prominent during this period. Beginning in the 1980s, political ideologies in India shifted away from secularism and socialism toward more religious and nationalist conceptions. This increasing religious nationalism in India, combined with government investment in education and technology in conjunction with increased efforts in globalization, created an environment of economic and cultural exchange, positioning India as both a place of economic opportunity and deep commitment to spirituality. Indira Gandhi had lead a highly centralized government that took draconian measures to

[13] Virinder S. Kalra and John Hutnyk, "Brimful of agitation, authenticity and appropriation: Madonna's 'Asian Kool'" *Postcolonial Studies* 1(3) (1998): 343.
[14] "History of Outsourcing to India," *Sourceline,* December 14, 2008, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.sourcingline.com/resources/history-of-outsourcing-to-india.

eradicate poverty in 1971 by declaring a state emergency, suspending all civil liberties, undertaking state-run sterilization, and demolishing the Sanjay slums. After a turbulent decade marked by increasing hostility between different religious and cultural factions, two Sikh guards assassinated Gandhi. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, succeeded her as prime minister (1984-1989), and he slowly moved the country away from his mother's statist policies toward a significant economic opening of India and new initiatives in private enterprise. India, up until this point, had been isolated from the global economy, and older politicians of varied political backgrounds "delighted to keep India free from the 'taint' of American culture and goods."[15] In order to combat entrenched resistance, Rajiv Gandhi courted a younger generation of "modern managers" who were more eager to take advantage of the "world of computers and mobile capital."[16] Amid these economic shifts, India faced a religious and nationalist undercurrent that positioned a Hindu-nationalist India against Islam. This period gave rise to an unfortunate extremist element, notorious for destroying the "Babri Masjid" mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 because it allegedly rested upon the birthplace of Rama, hero of the epic *Ramayana*. Under the surge of Hindu nationalism and following Rajiv Gandhi's assassination by members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Prime Minister P.V. Narashimha Rao took office (1991-1996) and began a much-needed overhaul of the Indian economy. Rao vastly reduced the system of bureaucratic licensing and controls and diminished the role of the

[15] Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of India,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 256.
[16] Ibid.

state in economic policies.[17] These reforms worked hand-in-hand with a growing, and sometimes deadly, anti-Muslim sentiment that highlighted the central role of Hinduism and its complementary spiritual practices within a new India.[18] Concurrent with policy changes and Hindu nationalism, the early managers Rajiv Gandhi had courted with computers and mobile capital became more firmly established, making Bangalore into an Indian Silicon Valley. Through policy change, international audiences came to understand India as an emerging technology hub and place of deep spirituality, which interacted with the economic and spiritual shifts occurring in the United States at the same time.

As the Indian labor force shifted toward a new technology economy, white-collar work in the United States moved into a new, more abstract realm, leading some Americans to feel disconnected from their labor. In his 1991 study, *The Work of Nations,* Robert Reich offered a broad definition of these workers as "symbolic analysts," an expansive definition that would include creative workers such as Elizabeth Gilbert and lifestyle companies such as lululemon. In Reich's definition, all symbolic analysts, regardless of actual industry, produce equally abstract products "not standardized things," but products that are in and of themselves a "manipulation of symbols - data words, oral

[17]After the collapse of the Soviet Union, with which India had various manufacturing agreements, India borrowed 1.5 billion dollars from the IMF and began a series of economic liberalization policies. These include the creation of a stock exchange, abolishment of export subsidies, lower tariffs, limiting of public industries and deregulation, or licensing, of most industries which resulted in "an annual growth of 7 %" Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of India,* 281.

[18] The violence in India and a growing cultural and political agitation between the Judeo-Christian West and the Muslim world following the end of the Cold War shaped Samuel Huntington's famous 1993 essay " Clash of Civilizations?" in which he hypothesized that future would be a "west versus the rest" mentality. See: Samuel Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs,* Summer 1993, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/48950/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations.

and visual representations."[19] More importantly, "symbolic analysts rarely interact with the ultimate beneficiaries of their work,"[20] a notion that speaks to detachment and alienation. This is not a new phenomenon, but it was a trend that became more common in the late 1990s and more lionized (i.e. Richard Florida's *The Creative Class,* perhaps the most popular champion of this new, expanding order of workers).[21] At issue here is alienation and abstraction of work in the United States technology industry that became increasingly intertwined with the technology industry in India.

This interconnectedness, however, did not manifest in meaningful material exchanges of work products between the two continents. The cultural exchange that occurred at this time paralleled the types of work connecting India and the U.S. To turn to a historical precedent, Stuart Hall has posited that as the production of goods in the Victorian period moved to the furthest outreaches of the British Empire, rather than within the metropole, middle-class Victorians filled their homes and advertisements with items from the reaches of the empire, providing an "imaginary way of relating to the real world."[22] By owning an abundance of small goods that connected them to raw materials and production far from their homes, they made an effort to contain that labor within a domestic setting. In this period of industrialization, the ways in which the Victorian middle class could connect to the increasingly distant economic modes of production

[19] Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 174.
[20] Ibid, 178.
[21] Since the mid 1800s, Marxists have argued that labor within the capitalist system leads to issues of alienation, however, the further abstraction of labor and its products create a sense of estrangement exacerbated by the social order.
[22] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (London: Sage Press, 2003), 240. Quoting: Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (London:Verso,1990).

took the form of tangible, material goods. In the late 1990s, with the changing nature of work, a changing means emerged to bridge the distance between intertwined economies led by symbolic analysts. In terms of yoga, as jobs in the tech industry flowed into India, a perceived quickened pace of life related to technology and the Western capitalist imperative to seek out cheap labor was mitigated by an increasing interest in the cultural products of India. Thus the kinds of commodities flowing from India to the U.S. in the 1990s and 2000s were far more abstract and disconnected than the earlier links between raw goods, manufacturing, and bric-a-brac in the Victorian Era that fit with the cult of domesticity of the period. The way to connect with India at this time came through increasing adoption of Indian style and yoga.

In the late 1990s, an abstraction of modes of production, a destabilization of the economic order, and a cult of the self continued to grow among middle-class Americans. Within this structure, yoga became an attractive export for Americans to incorporate into their lives that allowed them to feel more connected to themselves and at the same time make sense of an increasingly global economy. Rather than seek a material representation of the growing interconnectedness of India and the United States, Americans in larger numbers than ever before adopted and adapted yoga as a representative practice of changing economic and social conditions. Given the changing global economic picture based in empire building and the emergence of mass production via industrialization, yoga evolved as a fetishized commodity. The kind of labor Americans associate with India is technology services, rather than, for example, the manufacturing that is evident in China; thus, this abstracted labor in India does not align

with a tangible, permanent practice.[23] While yoga itself is not necessarily a product, an entire American yoga industry emerged in the 1990s, with lululemon athletica as one of the most profitable makers of yoga clothing and accessories in the U.S. and Canadian markets.

lululemon Origins & Corporate Mythology

One entry in the Urban Dictionary describes the masses of young, educated, middle-class women in Vancouver, British Columbia, walking around the city in tight lycra yoga pants and tank tops, adorned with abstract, red 'As' as lululemmings.[24] These young women wear their lululemon athletica yoga clothing, even when they are not on the way to a yoga class, even if they *never* practice yoga. lululemon, founded by Chip Wilson in 1998, is one of the fastest growing athletic wear companies in the world. Originally located in one store the Kitsalano neighborhood of Vancouver, the company has expanded to a global reach and by 2012 had revenue reaching $316.5 million.[25] Much like the successful mega-corporation Nike, lululemon is a lifestyle brand that not only sells clothes but also sells a template for an idealized life. Not just for the yoga studio, lululemon yoga pants, in particular, have gained a reputation for "making the tightest pants on the face of the planet. Possibly has something to do with yoga.

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[23] This particular connection between Hall's work and yoga in the 1990s was met with criticism from every member of my dissertation committee. I decided to include it here, because if there you can't present outlandish ideas as a test in a dissertation, where can you do that in academia?

[24] "lululemming," Urban Dictionary, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=lululemming

[25] 'lululemon Beats Rivals Sales Despite Week FY Guidance," *FashionUnited*, December 7, 2012, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.fashionunited.co.uk/fashion-news/fashion/lululemon-beats-rivals-sales-despite-weak-fy-guidance-2012120716426.

Definitely has something to do with horribly attractive girls with nice asses."[26] The company recognizes that their yoga clothing extends beyond the confines of the yoga studios, defining its corporate mission in response to the belief that "consumer purchase decisions are driven by both an actual need for functional products and a desire to create a particular lifestyle perception."[27] The company designs fairly basic clothing including tank tops, pants, shorts, and more, but what distinguishes lululemon in the world of athletic apparel is how it epitomizes contemporary yoga in the United States. Whereas small and varied groups defined yoga for most of the twentieth century, lululemon reflects a transition of yoga from the intimacy of smaller groups to a corporate identity that plays with ethnicity, authenticity, and gender on a mass scale.

The image lululemon constructs centers on two primary signifiers: yoga and women. In their advertising, their websites, and their stores one can see the ways in which lululemon creates a space that, while including men, largely focuses on women, youthfulness, and athleticism. lululemon began in 1998 as a multi-sport clothing company. In its first few years, it "focused on sports such as mountain biking, triathlon, rowing, yoga, ultimate [Frisbee] and volleyball," however for most of the first decade of the 2000s lululemon promoted itself primarily as a yoga company. [28] The corporate mythology that reigned during this yoga-focused heyday ignored these initial growing

[26] "luluemon," Urban Dictionary, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=lululemon.
[27] lululemon athletica, Form 10-K Annual Report (filed April 8, 2008), 2, from lululemon web site: http://investor.lululemon.com/secfiling.cfm?filingID=909567-08-415, accessed January 29, 2013.
[28] *lululemon athletica* (June 18, 2000), accessed November 18, 2007, http://web.archive.org/web/20000618165225/http://lululemon.com/.

pains, and instead presented lululemon as a corporation that has always focused on yoga with all other clothing merely a second thought.

Chip Wilson's decision to shift lululemon's focus onto yoga was not necessarily prescient, but certainly reflected a savvy response to changing views of yoga that began in the 1990s. Wilson transformed lululemon's focus to yoga at the suggestion of an early collaborator, Amrita Sondhi, a Kenyan of Indian descent who immigrated to Canada as a teenager and who lululemon omits from its corporate mythology. Sondhi, in an interview promoting her own line of yoga wear, stated that she met Wilson in 1998 and began working with him to create lululemon. Though Wilson has become the main figurehead, Sondhi's suggestion that lululemon produce yoga apparel along with its other athletic clothing set the course for the company's future. Her absence from the lululemon origins story, which portrays Wilson as the sole founder and public voice of lululemon, is partially due to her brief time with the company; she left after only two years.[29] However, her absence also tacitly shapes the overall image of lululemon. Sunaina Maira has argued that authentic ethnicity is a potentially desirable selling point for Indo-chic trends.[30] In the case of Sondhi's role in lululemon, one wonders why Wilson did not capitalize on Sondhi's exotic origins and ethnic difference as potentially giving lululemon an "authentic" link to yoga. Rather, it seems that Wilson had no interest in laying claim to any kind of history or "authenticity" associated with yoga. Instead, he

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[29] Hadani Ditmars, *A Bold New Movement* (November 27, 2007 cited); available from http://www.shared-vision.com/sv-features/20070501/a-bold-new-movement, Pawlik-Kienien, *Lululemon & Ayurvedic Cookbooks* (2007); available from http://psychology.suite101.com/article.cfm/lululemon_ayurvedic_cookbooks.

[30] See Sunaina Maira, "Henna and Hip Hop: The Politics of Cultural Production and the Work of Cultural Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies,* 3 no.3 (2000).

constructed lululemon's image to be a variety of modern and universal yoga, unfettered by cultural or ethnic difference, that would appeal to the widest audience.

In an effort to capitalize on market share, a growing company like lululemon branded itself in a way that would appeal to the largest population possible. In Chip Wilson's estimation, this meant divorcing yoga from its roots in Indian culture and its more recent history in the alternative communities of the 1970s. lululemon's success rests primarily in its ability to complement pre-existing consumer desires. It is the perfect product of a hegemonic system where the goal is not the manipulation, but the legitimation, of the dominant group's values. lululemon capitalized on yoga as a perfect vessel for the ideals and values of U.S. society at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Simulacrum and Cultural Cosmopolitanism

As lululemon increased its global presence, it used the idea of yoga as a vessel for "universal" values combined with local community building. In part, lululemon fosters this balance between the local and the global by employing yoga instructors near their boutiques to model their clothing, offering free community classes in their stores and inviting constant feedback on their designs from customers and employees. Through this marketing strategy, lululemon embeds itself in preexisting communities, while maintaining a global image sustained by the universality attached to yoga.

At first glance, one could argue that lululemon, with its emphasis on yoga, was engaged in a kind of multiculturalism akin to the successful and notorious 1990s ad

campaigns of the United Colors of Benetton or The Body Shop.[31] However, lululemon's corporate identity does not champion diversity or cross-pollination of cultural ideas. As of 2008, the images on their website focused on predominantly white women doing yoga poses in front of recognizable Canadian and U.S. landmarks, i.e. the Vancouver coast line and monuments in Washington D.C. In 2012, the main website focused less on inspirational imagery and more on the clothing, though they still maintain links to literature on goal-setting and basic yoga information. While other aspirational lifestyle companies, such as The Body Shop and Benetton, celebrated, or more realistically capitalized on, multiculturalism in their ad campaigns, lululemon merely uses yoga to symbolize "anti-stress," "anti-modernity," and "community." The core values of lululemon exist not in traditional yoga teaching but in the company's manifesto. They engage their "manifesto" to broadcast yoga-style platitudes, including: "Love"; "Jealousy works the opposite way you want it to"; and "Breathe deeply and appreciate the moment. Living in the moment could be the meaning of life." Yet these yoga-ish sayings are balanced with capitalist pragmatism like: "Don't trust that an old age pension will be enough" and "Successful people replace the words 'wish', 'should' and 'try' with 'I will.' Ineffective people don't."[32] These are just a few representative quotes, however approximately thirty other sayings adorn lululemon shopping bags and stores, and have

[31] For more information on The Body Shop's and Benetton's use of multiculturalism see: Henry Giroux, "Consuming Social Change: The 'United Colors of Benetton'," *Cultural Critique* 26 (1993-1994), Caren Kaplan, "'a World without Boundaries': The Body Ship's Trans/National Geographics," *Social Text* 43 (1995), Serra Tinic, "United Colors and Untied Meanings: Benetton and the Commodification of Social Issues," *Journal of Communication* 47, no. 3 (1997).
[32] Chip Wilson, *Lululemon Manifesto* (2007 [cited 11/20 2007]); available from http://www.lululemon.com.

played an integral part in their website at various times. These sound bites lack context and substance, but create a feeling that lululemon can help consumers successfully balance their pragmatic capitalist lives with the anti-stress ethos of yoga.

lululemon's use of yoga is in effect a simulacrum; the signifiers of yoga are present, yet they have been extricated and refashioned from their original history or meaning.[33] From the construction of its logo, picked for its visual impact and divorced from any meaning, to its nonsensical name that Wilson purposefully intended to be difficult for Japanese consumers to pronounce and therefore increase its cultural cache in that market lululemon has used an idea of yoga that is so far removed from the history or reality of yoga that it becomes merely an empty vessel for the company to fill with its own constructed meaning.[34]

In addition, lululemon uses these simulacrum of yoga to create a brand identity that is best defined as "moderate cultural cosmopolitanism."[35] This type of cosmopolitanism promotes the idea that cultural difference can be valuable, but that the exchange of such cultural existence does not override pre-existing cultural beliefs. So, in the case of lululemon, yoga, as a signifier, is a culturally different practice, but it is a practice that does not overtake the individualistic, capitalist bent of the company or its consumers. Though Wilson would not articulate this strategy in terms of cultural

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[33] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*.

[34] Based on Wilson's previous business experience, he believed that Japanese consumers fetishized the letter l, since it was difficult for them to pronounce. Based on this assumption Wilson decided to come up with a name with 3 "l"s in it. The name itself is nonsensical. Similarly the "a" logo is just a stylized "a," that comes from the word athletic. For more on this see: *How the Name "Lululemon Athletica" Was Created* (2007 [cited 11/20 2007]); available from http://www.lululemon.com.

[35] Charles Jones, "Cosmopolitanism," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald Borchert (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006).

cosmopolitanism, he has stated that he views some members of the yoga community as zealots who have lost touch with reality. Wilson has made it clear that his yoga practice, and the kind of practice lululemon promotes, supplements other athletic endeavors. lululemon does not promote yoga for the sake of yoga, rather it is a complement to other athletic activities or an antidote to modern stress.[36]

A particularly illuminating position taken by luluemon in the fall of 2011 was the decision to release shopping bags adorned with the phrase "Who is John Galt?" This decision, and the publics' response, revealed on the one hand what people's entrenched positions the definition of yoga, and, on the other hand, how the decision to use this bag exposed an uneasy relationship between capitalism and yoga in the minds of some practitioners. The confluence of yoga and the most famous line from Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) caused a small media sensation as people protested the choice to wed yoga and Rand, whose writing and philosophy strike many as the antithesis of yoga's purpose and mission. John Galt epitomized Rand's philosophy that self-interested behavior, devoid of subjective emotions and unfettered by government involvement, was the best possible way to live. The two main protagonists in *Atlas Shrugged*, Dagny Taggart and Hank Rearden, are two frustrated captains of industry, whose ambitions are limited by intrusive government regulations. Misfits in an economically declining society, Rand summarized Taggert and Rearden's outlook in a brief exchange: "We haven't any spiritual goals or qualities. All we're after is material things. That's all we

[36] Hilary MacGregor "Take a Deep Breath,Yoga Ad Was a Joke" *Los Angeles Time*, March 11, 2002 accessed January 16, 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/2002/mar/11/health/he-yoga11.

care for."[37] They are unapologetic about his stance, believing that "it's [they] who made the world and it's [they] who'll pull it through."[38] These characters identify strongly with John Galt, a captain of industry who has dropped out of society to create his own free-market society. This self-interested, anti-communitarian, and capitalist-driven ethos created a negative response to the bags among lululemon customers and yogis. In a report on National Public Radio, Simon Houpt found that customers felt that the Galt bags were "completely contrary to the teachings of yoga, that yoga is, in fact, a core component of building community and that the notion of self-interest in fact, runs completely against that." [39] The company, in an effort to defend its choice of the quote, explained that they felt *Atlas Shrugged* "inspire[d] people to embrace greatness rather than this life of sad disappointment."[40] Stating on their official corporate blog that the "bags are visual reminders for ourselves to live a life we love and conquer the epidemic of mediocrity, we all have John Galt inside of us cheering us on."[41]

The tension in the John Galt bag incident reflects a battle over the definition of yoga between some consumers and owners. Whereas lululemon views yoga as a way to rise above mediocrity via physical effort and stress reduction, some customers felt that yoga was about more than just selfish interests and had important elements of spirituality and community building that they valued. On one hand, customers displayed discomfort

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[37] Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged (Centennial Edition)* (New York: Penguin Publishing, 2005*)* Kindle edition, location 2198.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Simon Houpt "lululemon Customers Asked 'Who is John Galt?,'" "All Things Considered" on *National Public Radio,* aired November 17, 2011, accessed January 16, 2013, http://www.npr.org/2011/11/17/142472057/lululemon-customers-asked-who-is-john-galt.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Alexis, "Who is John Galt?" on lululemon blog, November 2, 2011, accessed January 16, 2013,http://www.lululemon.com/community/blog/who-is-john-galt/?sli=1.

with the self-interested capitalist message intrinsic to the John Galt quote; on the other hand, the clothing in the bag often includes Lycra pants that cost over 100 dollars. Long before John Galt appeared on lululemon shopping bags, the relationship between self-interest and unbridled capitalism coexisted in the company's merchandise. Furthermore, issues with yoga's "real" purpose as it relates to community, individualism, and spirituality have been in a state of flux and tension since its arrival in the United States. The extreme political discourse associated with John Galt and with yoga highlighted this tension to consumers who had guarded what they perceived to be the purity of timeless yoga in their own lives, even though in the United States and India a pure, unadulterated yoga has never really existed.

Women: Chip Wilson's Gross Generalization

While lululemon upset some of its customers with its John Galt bags, founder Chip Wilson added personal "musings" to the lululemon website in early 2007, constructing the origins of the company based on antagonistic relationship between generations of women while exalting the same neoliberal ideals of the Galt bag in a less conspicuously public forum.[42] Wilson's musings illustrate how he deploys terms like "control," "women," and "yoga" to create lululemon's corporate identity and a view of contemporary women. In this view, Wilson reduces progress in gender relationships and women's growing independence over the second half of the twentieth century to nothing more than a source for the marital, labor, and familial problems of contemporary life.

[42] Date determined via wayback machine at http://archive.org/web/web.php.

Essentially, women and their history are the problem, and yoga practiced in lululemon clothing becomes the antidote to the "problems" of changing gender roles in U.S. history.

Wilson's essays "how lululemon came into being: A GROSS GENERALIZATION" constructs lululemon's origins in the context of women's "history" in the late twentieth century. The essay is indeed "gross;" besides flattening and generalizing the lives of women and the women's movement, it portrays women in a disturbing and disrespectful manner. By classifying this essay as a generalization, Wilson, an undeniably shrewd businessman, could easily dismiss critics for taking it too seriously and reading too deeply into something that, of course, oversimplifies the issues. However, the contents of his essay show such an egregious disregard for historical facts and, at the same time, are situated as the reason Wilson developed a company for women that it is important to take his musings seriously.

One of the core critiques Wilson has about Baby Boomer women is that they wanted an inappropriate amount of control over their lives and bodies, which he implies led an entire generation away from their true femininity and appropriate gender roles. Wilson dates lululemon origin to the early 1970s (almost thirty years prior to its actual creation) misidentifying the period with the advent of birth control pills. The Pill, in his estimation, put young women in "total control" of their reproductive capacity and sexuality. Thus freeing women from the need to "make" relationships work since now, via a daily dose of hormones, women "believed" they had control over their lives and their careers. The Pill not only liberated women sexually, but also liberated them from financial dependence on men, because once they had gained "a sense of equality"

sexually, they transferred that equality into the workplace. Throughout the beginning of his essay, Wilson described women in terms of their desire for "control" and the illusion, or in his words "sense," that they had achieved such control. Wilson's choice of words drip with condescension; where women did not actually work for equality, but were suddenly entitled because of birth control pills. The new female in Wilson's vision emerged solely from the reproductive control bestowed by the Pill, which allows him to ignore any feminist history, and thus avoids endowing women with any positive agency. Furthermore, by conceiving the Pill as the catalyst for powerful social change, he frames the social progress of women in the 1970s and 1980s as unnatural; social progress results from a prescription, not persistence.

According to Wilson, by stepping out of the "proper," feminine, domestic realm the Pill ushered in the era of divorce, a period in which Wilson believes women naively internalized the media's message that they could be successful in the home and in the workplace. These "power women's" attempts to balance family and work left them without "social life, exercise, balance, [or] sleep." Furthermore, as Wilson described, they lost their femininity as evident in the masculine, big-shouldered suits they chose to wear and the appropriation of the vices of their fathers, like drinking and smoking. These changing roles, according to Wilson, are again unnatural. Nowhere does Wilson interrogate men's reactions to changes in domestic and workplace gender relations; the burden of change rests solely on women.

Instead of considering shifting ideas about gender, sexuality, and marriage in the 1970s and 1980s, Wilson antagonistically suggests that the women's movement

victimized men and their understandings of marriage. Even though women only thought they had power, men were sideswiped by these "new female[s]," so vastly different from their mothers. Wilson views this disruption as the reason for rising divorce rates. Thus, at home, these "power women" raised daughters to value independence and education, not for its own sake but to prepare them for their own inevitable divorces later in life, presumably another unnatural state wrought by birth control pills in the hands of unruly women.

This historical lambasting of his female contemporaries allows Wilson to frame himself as a champion of a younger generation of women who had learned from their mothers' mistakes. For Wilson, this works to establish his brand as clothing designed for a young and appropriately feminine audience. By conjuring a target demographic of "super girls," Wilson emphasizes qualities and values coveted by clothing designers, but absent from most people's view of yoga. "Super girls" only saw their fathers on weekends, and these men, unsure of how to raise daughters, relied on club sports to bond with their daughters, thereby positioning them as not only their daughters' coaches, but also their "mentors." Here Wilson sets the stage for men to be these girls' heroes; fathers and athletics in effect saved their daughters from their mothers' misguided lifestyles. Aside from weekend sports with dad, the other major salubrious influence on these girls' lives was Saturday morning cartoons. The buxom, cartoon superwomen "wearing tight, stylish lycra and a cape" offered these girls an alternative to the boxy suits of their chain-smoking, workaholic (if not alcoholic) mothers. In Wilson's opinion these cartoon heroines became icons for young girls who rejected their mothers' fashion, a fashion that

reflected the mothers' desire to look like men in order to compete with men. Wilson commends the "super girls" for understanding their own femininity and avoiding the "foolish" mistake of trying to compete directly with men.

In a final characterization of the lululemon customer, Wilson allows that highly educated, athletic, and upwardly mobile women had finally evolved, and that yoga had become an integral part of a successful life that departed from the goals of their mothers' generation. With three main influences, mom, dad, and television, these "super girls" grew up to attend university and excel both academically and athletically, though Wilson never credits moms with their daughters' academic success. Upon graduation, Wilson argues, that these girls tried to recreate their mothers' unsuccessful balance of work and family that lead these young women to experience the same high levels of stress. However, unlike their mothers, these "super girls" found the antidote to their stressful modern lives in the natural endorphins released during exercise: the gift their fathers had given them during childhood.

According to Wilson, the best solution to these problems was, not surprisingly, yoga, which Wilson says emerged in 1997, a date that just barely preceded the founding of lululemon. Yoga's accessibility was essential to its expansion and lululemon's success; it can be done anywhere and is not necessarily time-consuming but still able to produce the endorphins necessary for relaxation. Wilson ends his "gross generalization" with the conclusion that: "Ultimately, lululemon was formed because female education levels, breast cancer, yoga/athletics and the desire to dress feminine came together all at

one time."[43] lululemon, with its superhero-inspired Lycra clothing, facilitates these "super girls" successful negotiation of the masculine, stressful, and unnatural lives they inherited from their mothers.

Wilson's idealized "super girls" create and perpetuate lululemon's target demographic; the idealized "super girl", who leads a balanced life and retains her femininity, is a model Wilson wants his customers to admire and strive to emulate. This origin myth champions the "super girl" and her father in the end, while reviling her mother. Given Wilson's sketchy timeline, the "super girls" he is describing fit into lululemon's target demographic of "32-year-old professional women," who are also "well-educated, [and] athletically driven."[44] These imagined "super girls" are abstractions of womanhood defined by external forces like the Pill, work, stress, etc. Beyond this, lululemon also positions them as cultural cosmopolitans who, through education and economic status, are able to recognize the importance of natural stress relief and are thus willing to adopt yoga, which even into the 1990s remained culturally foreign, without weakening their standing in Western culture.

Absent from much of this gender-focused conversation about lululemon is the actual role of yoga in the company. Yoga merely serves as a signifier of something vaguely spiritual and therefore uplifting without any real effort on the part of a

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[43] Chip Wilson, "How lululemon Came into Being: A Gross Generalization" posted March 30, 2009, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.lululemon.com/community/blog/how-lululemon-came-into-being-a-gross-generalization/.

[44] "Smarter than the Average Yoga Pants," Canwest News Service, October 14, 2008, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/news/arts/story.html?id=076c466d-f522-4fb8-9370-4d6ebaf4522d; And "lululemon athletica Gains Partners in Growth Equity Investment," lululemon press release, December 8, 2005, accessed January 29, 2013, http://investor.lululemon.com/releasedetail.cfm?releaseid=241303.

practitioner. The real message of lululemon remains: "We haven't any spiritual goals or qualities. All we're after is material things. That's all we care for."[45] More so than the Madonna Indo-chic discussed above, lululemon erases overt markers of ethnicity, race, and culture in an effort to make yoga accessible to as broad an audience as possible. Because the connection between lululemon and yoga seem to be in name only within the larger corporate structure, people are encouraged to interpret yoga, or not, to suit their individual needs. The popularization of Indian traditions, such as henna and mehndi, in the United States has been the focus of Sunaina Maira's research on, what she calls, Indo-chic. Maira believes that since the events of September 11, 2001, scholars need to reconsider how the formulation of Orientalism in U.S. culture operates. Regarding this point, Maira briefly states that: "Indo-chic is no longer simply a sign of ethnic authenticity or racial difference to be safely consumed as a commodity but has become a symbol of foreignness that has, at least temporarily, been transformed for some into a threat to the United States."[46] Working from Maira's assertion that Indo-chic has become a potentially threatening foreign commodity following September 11, 2001, one can see how lululemon has successfully maintained only the scantest connections to yoga while capitalizing on yoga as a leisure practice of women with extra income and time.

lululemon is not alone in conceiving yoga with only a cursory link to spirituality. As scholar Sarah Strauss has articulated, yoga is not commonly seen as "a way to regain lost heritage, or family tradition, but rather to 'find oneself' to anchor the self in a

[45] Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged,* location 2198.
[46]Sunaina Maira, "Indo-Chic: Late Capitalist Orientalism and Imperial Culture," in *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America*, ed. Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh N. Tu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 240.

cosmopolitan society which is rapidly deterritorializing."[47] Pushing Strauss's assessment further, we can see that the events of September 11, 2001, exacerbated political and religious tensions worldwide. These global tensions have made some psychologists consider the impact these events had on the public psyche. Research has revealed that after September 11, 2001, Americans became less preoccupied with their own pathologies and more concerned with "what makes people's lives worth living, what enhances adaptation to stress, and what promotes strong civic engagement."[48] lululemon's reliance on yoga could potentially fulfill this documented psychological shift. Since lululemon constructs yoga as a means to improve oneself via reduced stress, which in turn positively impacts the entire world, this formulation provides answers to the newly urgent concerns of American's following September 11, 2001.

Overall, lululemon's success is a crystallization of a new kind of Indo-chic following the events of September 11, 2001. lululemon, by creating a simulacrum based on yoga, has been able to negotiate the needs of a spiritually hungry, but xenophobic, consumer environment. lululemon provides just enough yoga, with its attendant mysticism and anti-modern cache, to make it "spiritually" reassuring in that through yoga one can improve oneself and, by extension, the world at large. Furthermore, at the same time, lululemon avoids attaching any overt ethnicity or exotic culture to its products in order to present a safe commodity to Western consumers. Thus lululemon sells a product that offers peace of mind via acculturated yoga. As Maira intuited, the role of Indo-chic,

[47] Sarah Strauss, *Positioning Yoga Balancing Acts across Cultures* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005) 85.
[48] Amy l. Ai et al., "Meaning, and Growth Following the September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks, " *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20, no. 5 (2005): 524.

at least in terms of lululemon's construction of yoga, has changed following September 11, 2001, and it will be interesting to see if scholarship on other exotic-chic commodities reveals similar changes.

At the heart of lululemon's corporate identity is yoga; however, unlike the visibly exotic Indo-chic trends Maira addresses, lululemon produces representations of yoga stripped of their cultural origins. According to Maira, "Indo-chic thus became an orientalist trope par excellence in the late 1990s, making visible an exoticized India while simultaneously repressing the social histories and material relations that connect India and the United States."[49] lululemon not only ignores the social and material relationship between North America and India, it has also taken the Indo out of Indo-chic.

While lululemon represents yoga primarily as an athletic practice rather than a spiritual one, there are other contemporary interpretations of yoga in the United States. For one, Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* highlights a popular representation of yoga that is centered more on meditation and exoticism than lululemon. In these differences, these two equally popular representations of yoga allow us to explore the popular ideas about yoga that offer similar definitions of individualism and self-interest in a neo-liberal context.

Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search

Even with similar definitions of ideal womanhood via the lens of yoga, *Eat, Pray, Love* differs significantly from lululemon in the way that Elizabeth Gilbert strongly attaches yoga to India; even though she practices yoga in the United States, Gilbert

[49] Ibid., 223.

"really" experiences yoga when she arrives in India. Gilbert's relationship to yoga in both the U.S. and India is simultaneously a transnational, religious practice and appropriation, but, more fruitfully, her memoir straddles a line between spiritual pilgrimage and tourism in that she is on a sincere quest for spiritual well-being, but also trapped by her own background and occupation into presenting a tourist's version of her experience. By walking a line between pilgrim and tourist, Gilbert tightly binds yoga to India. So strongly are the associations of India and yoga for Gilbert, that she experiences her entire time in India through, what could be called, a yoga-worldview. Within this worldview Gilbert presents her readers with a narrow view of yoga and India that, in contrast to lululemon, but similarly to previous American yoga teachers, reinforces economic privilege and inequality.

Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* became one of the runaway best sellers of 2006, spawning a sequel, a film, branded excursions, and various accessories. Her memoir spoke to a broad audience through its personal and self-deprecating reflection on Gilbert's dissatisfaction with middle-class womanhood and a desire to escape the trappings of that life. Whereas lululemon defines the purpose of yoga as a means to rise above mediocrity and be financially successful, Gilbert's memoir *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006) views yoga as path to happiness. In Gilbert's estimation, "The yogic path is about disentangling the built-in glitches of the human condition, which I'm going to over-simply define here as the heartbreaking inability to sustain contentment."[50] In her reading of yoga, the desires to create community, to become more beautiful, or to expand the

[50] Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 122.

mind that shaped yoga in the past recedes into the background. Gilbert never clearly defines what that happiness looks like, but she implicitly ascribes to a definition of the word adopted by many Americans who "view happiness as the main aim of development and place it above other important values," such as hard work, moral choices, and community building.[51] While happiness can manifest itself in many ways, in 2000 researchers found that most young adults believed that happiness mainly revolved around the fulfillment of their own desires (often the desire to be "comfortably wealthy").[52] In fairness to Gilbert, what is at issue here is a larger problem of the goals of Americans; goals she herself had achieved and chafed under prior to her journey. Gilbert is focused on happiness, but wary of the prescribed version of happiness she has bought into, for her, yoga offers a way to "intensify joy and ease suffering" in her life.[53] In terms of Gilbert's exploration of a yogic path to her readers, she champions happiness as entirely focused on her own needs and whims, which are deeply entangled with her struggles to define her role as a woman, a partner, and a potential future mother.

Gilbert opens her memoir with a scene depicting a common sense of domestic dissatisfaction; she is alone on her bathroom floor repeating to herself, "I don't want to be married anymore."[54] This happens to Gilbert night after night until her marriage

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[51] Richard Weissbourd, *The Parents We Mean to Be: How Well-Intentioned Adults Undermine Children's Moral and Emotional Development*, (Boston: Houghton Mufflin Harcourt, 2009) Kindle edition, 40-47.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Thomas Tweed uses the phrase "intensify joy and ease suffering" as the baseline for understanding how religion functions in people's lives. I include it here because it is easy to see Gilbert as a careless, appropriator of culture without giving credence to her desire to find meaning. Thomas Tweed, "Theory and Method in the Study of Buddhism: Toward 'Translocative' Analysis," *Journal Of Global Buddhism* (March 2011): 12:16-32. Available from: Academic Search Complete, Ipswich, MA. Accessed February 25, 2013, 21.
[54] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 10.

dissolves in a bitter divorce. Following her divorce, she enters in an intense, but dysfunctional relationship with a boyfriend. When that relationship ends, Gilbert parlays her career as a travel writer into a yearlong trip to Italy, India, and Indonesia, where she embarks on a journey of self-discovery away from men. Gilbert offers her readers escapism by inviting them into her very privileged, if currently fragile life, and, by proxy, has the potential to offer readers a way to ease their own suffering. The act of reading *Eat, Pray, Love* suggests to readers that if Gilbert's own turn inward and her selfish brand of spirituality saved her, perhaps it could do the same for them. Even though Gilbert had the extraordinary opportunity to travel freely and widely without economic constraints for a year, readers could adopt her simple and accessible spirituality to their own unsatisfactory lives by reading her memoir and buying its attendant products.

Even though *Eat, Pray, Love* reflects one woman's journey and understanding of yoga, it belongs a larger genre of "priv-lit" which "hid[es] familiar motives behind ambient lighting and organic scented candles, the genre at once masks and promotes the destructive expectations of traditional femininity and consumer culture, making them that much harder to fight."[55] *Eat, Pray, Love*'s chapter structure literally serves as the "ambient lighting and organic scented candles" of Gilbert's main purpose. Gilbert divided her memoir into 109 short chapters organized in three sections based on the *japa malas*, a string of 109 beads worn by yogis to assist in their meditation, which she felt gave her memoir an auspicious and structured balance. Critically, this division amounts

[55] Joshunda Saunders and Diana Barnes- Brown "Eat, Pray, Spend: Priv-lit and The New Enlightened American Dream" *Bitch Magazine*, October, 22 2010, accessed January 16, 2013, http://bitchmagazine.org/article/eat-pray-spend.

to little more than a literary gimmick that provides an illusion of spiritual heft to Gilbert's journey of personal discovery. Despite the relative meaninglessness of the chapter structure, by employing this method Gilbert exercises sufficient spiritual knowledge to establish herself as an authority even as she tells her readers that she writes from "a personal standpoint and not as a theological scholar or as anybody's official spokesperson."[56] Even if she is not an official spokesperson of her guru's beliefs, Gilbert's authorial voice offers an often entertaining introduction to various philosophical points about yoga that shape her audiences ideas about what yoga means. Furthermore, Gilbert's interpretation of yoga, as in previous Western understandings of yoga, depicts India as a place to escape social constraints while reasserting colonial fantasies and constraints on the people she encounters. The intentional and unintentional consequences of *Eat, Pray, Love* and its offshoots reaffirm a consumer-based and femininized version of yoga that focuses on highly individualized concerns regarding happiness and contentment, even as it purports to reject those ideas. The rest of this chapter looks closely at *Eat, Pray, Love* and considers Gilbert's struggle to find her "true" self through yoga.

The beginning of Gilbert's "journey," to use the Oprah-esque word for the passage of time, she breaks away from the home she has created and starts on a path to spirituality on which she etches a dichotomy between: 1) domesticity and over-consumption; and 2) spirituality and anti-materialism. In Gilbert's opening chapters she berates herself for not loving "the prestigious home in the Hudson Valley, the apartment

[56] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 2.

in Manhattan, the eight phone lines, the friends and the picnics and the parties, the weekends spent roaming the aisles of some box-shaped superstore of [her and her husband's] choice, buying ever more appliances on credit."[57] The list of prestigious possessions and capitalistic freedom wore her down not because of the sheer abundance, but, she explains, because she earned far more money than her husband and therefore felt the burden of financing more possessions. She felt "overwhelmed" and "tired of being the primary breadwinner and the housekeeper and the social coordinator and the dog-walker and the wife and the soon-to-be mother and - somewhere in [her] stolen moments - a writer."[58] Gilbert, in her list of obligatory roles, articulates the common complaint ascribed to contemporary life, particularly for women and mothers, that there is too much to do and not enough time in which to do it; Chip Wilson would most likely attribute Gilbert's problems to the legacy of feminism as described above. On top of the anxieties about the things she had, she feared becoming a parent because of the additional attendant responsibilities. Motherhood in her mind would take up her entire self, a role that would squeeze out any other part of her identity, leaving her "in a big, busy household full of children and homemade quilts, with a garden in the backyard and a cozy stew bubbling on the stovetop," an image of her own mother's life during Gilbert's childhood in the suburbs of Connecticut.[59] Gilbert's existential crisis revolved around her roles as wife and potential mother. Superficially, her travels to foreign countries and attachment to yoga appear as an escape route from these roles, but her struggles are

[57] Ibid., 11.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 10.

deeply internalized even as she departs from the familiar. As we shall see, she continually reframes her experience with yoga in the traditional role of wife and mother, which makes her experiences relatable to a wider audience, and also explores some of the inescapable personal issues that she carries with her regardless of where she travels or how intensely she practices yoga.

Gilbert's spiritual awakening, a deeply internal and solitary experience, came during the darkest moments of her marriage. Understanding her spirituality as something internal exacerbates the later problematic interpretations Gilbert brings with her to India. As Gilbert faced the worst period of her marriage she, like many other people would, turned to God and asked "please tell me what to do." The god she found one night on her bathroom floor lived inside of her. She relates that she heard a voice answer "go back to bed, Liz" and that "it was merely my own voice, speaking from within my own self [but]...This was my voice, but perfectly wise, calm and compassionate. This was what my voice would sound like if I'd only ever experienced love and certainty in my life."[60] This turning inward to find spirituality stands in contrast to all of her outward possessions, which that she viewed as a representation of the ways in which she was dissatisfied in her marriage. In this spiritual moment, she experiences what she calls a "conversation," not a "conversion."[61] She appeals to the divine wisdom within, a trajectory that comes out of a New Age inner goddess culture, which appears to ignore material or systemic inequality in favor of selfishness dressed up in wisdom and spirituality.

[60] Ibid., 15-16.
[61] Ibid., 16.

While her spiritual "conversation" began with impromptu prayers, it was not until after her divorce that Gilbert settled on a particular lineage of yoga. After her divorce, Gilbert dated "David," who introduced her to his spiritual teacher and, as Gilbert reveals, "I kind of fell in love with them both at the same time."[62] This comment foreshadows the ways in which Gilbert, even as she tries to escape relationships with men via spirituality, continually grafts heteronormative relationships onto her spiritual practice. Gilbert follows David to a gathering of the guru's devotees and soon, begins a daily meditation of *Om Namah Shiyava* "I honor the divinity that resides in me."[63] While David proved to be a disastrous partner for Gilbert, her relationship with her guru confirmed her desire to be her own god. Gilbert has never named her guru, but it is most likely Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, the head of the Siddha Yoga Path headquartered in the Catskills Mountains of New York.[64] Siddha Yoga relies on large amounts of reflection, each day starting out with a required 90-minute meditation and some physical yoga. Perhaps because the leader is a woman, Siddha yoga "attracts large numbers of women many of whom are well-educated professionals."[65] Though some women are attracted to Siddha yoga for the female Guru, much of its appeal stems from an abstract view of the divine that resides within, therefore allowing believers to ascribe a very personal set of beliefs and characters to their deity. While certain elements of liberation are present within

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[62] Ibid., 24.
[63] Ibid., 25.
[64] Siddha Yoga, like many other yoga groups has dealt with its own series of scandals surrounding sex, money, and authoritarian control. For coverage of that trouble and Siddha Yoga's response to the scandals see: Riddhi Shah "The 'Eat, Pray, Love' Guru's Troubling Past," September 18, 2010, accessed January 28, 2013 http://www.salon.com/topic/elizabeth_gilbert/.
[65] Rosemary Keller and Rosemary Ruether, eds. *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006): 670-671.

Siddha yoga, Guruyami also believes in a heteronormative worldview, frowning on homosexuality and championing traditional domestic roles; Gilbert claims to want to escape this rubric, but it seems inextricable from her worldview.

Despite her explicit and implicit dedication to Siddha yoga, Gilbert remains cautious in the ways she frames her spirituality, which, she reassures her readers, had been up until this moment of crisis a foreign concept. She explains: "culturally, though not theologically, I am a Christian." A true WASP who never fully bought into Protestantism, she claimed to have always "responded to the transcendent mystics of all religions."[66] Similar to the Theosophists and Universalists of the nineteenth century Gilbert believed:

> You have every right to cherry-pick when it comes to moving your spirit and finding peace in God. I think you are free to search for any metaphor whatsoever which will take you across the worldly divide whenever you need to be transported or comforted. It's nothing to be embarrassed about....You take whatever works from wherever you can find it, and you keep moving toward the light.[67]

Gilbert is far from alone in this adoption of new spiritual practices; according to a 2009 Pew poll 24% of American adults worship a faith other than the one in which they were raised.[68] The easy abandonment of the familial spiritual culture and the magpie approach to creating a new spirituality pushes aside questions of community, morality, sacrifice, and good work all in the name of pleasing oneself in a journey toward the inner "light" of divinity. Although Gilbert rejects her Protestant heritage, by choosing Sidhha yoga and

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[66] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 14.
[67] Ibid., 208.
[68] Philip Goldberg, *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation - How Indian Spirituality Changed the West* (New York: Harmony Books, 2010), 340.

Guruyami, she frames her choice in terms of New England pragmatism and rejects the New Age interpretation of yoga. She rages during her stay in the ashram, "I'm in such an emotional state I can't stand it and I don't want to hear anyone's hippie *theories.*"[69] Her attraction to her Guru and her Guru's Guru was their practicality. Writing about her swamiji's visit to the U.S. in the 1970s, she asserts that "he brought ancient concepts of discipline to the lives of his often rebellious young Western followers, commanding them to stop wasting their own (and everyone else's) time and energy with their freewheeling hippie nonsense."[70] Again Gilbert embraces her personal interpretation of yoga while rejecting a continually pervasive view of yoga in the U.S. as some kind of New Age, "hippie nonsense." Here, the neoliberal underpinnings of Gilbert's view of yoga are seen in the characteristic individualism, hard work, and lack of rebellion against power structures in the United States. This interpretation of yoga provides Gilbert with a way to resolve the personal tension between her material desires and spiritual goals.

At the time of her memoir's publication, Gilbert's focus on yoga set her apart from other memoirists, but, as Jeffery Paine documented in his study of travelers to India, since the earliest Western excursions, all travelers wanted in some way "to look at the predicament of the West from a different perspective, a different spiritual latitude."[71] While it may seem that Gilbert's focus on her own self has little to do with an examination of the predicament of the West, in general her memoir reflects larger ambivalences faced by heterosexual American women. In surveys of American women, the Pew Report found

[69] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 147
[70] Ibid., 166.
[71] Jeffery Paine, *Father India: A Western Adventure*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 4-5.

that 62% of Americans preferred a dual-income family to an arrangement where only the husband works; however, when questions focused on motherhood, the organization found 40% of working moms said they *always* feel rushed...compare[d] with 24% of the general public"[72] So, despite the personal and individuated nature of Gilbert's memoir, her experience as a white, middle-class heterosexual woman reflects larger ambivalences about women's relationship to work and family. In the same Pew poll, most people preferred that women work, but at the same time motherhood disproportionately compounded the responsibilities of working mothers, one of Gilbert's primary anxieties. Gilbert's global sojourn of self-discovery, like travelers before her, revealed a hope that India would offer "an 'answer to our perplexities and dead-locked problems.'"[73] Here, Paine is referring to larger societal concerns, whereas Gilbert's concern is only her own personal problems. Paine suggests that certain famous travelers to India, including E.M. Forrester, Madame Blavatsky, and Christopher Isherwood, helped to define "contemporary experience" as they went to India saddled with their "unconscious assumptions of their religion, their society, or their own identity."[74] Rather than use these assumptions to make India conform to their understandings of behavior, they "used such encounters to challenge that understanding." In contrast, Gilbert imposed her understandings of the West on her experiences abroad; even though her experience is a search for answers to common problems, Gilbert does not use her experience in India to

[72] Pew Research Center Publications "Women, Work and Motherhood: A Sampler of Recent Pew Research Survey Findings" April 13, 2012, accessed January 16, 2013 http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2241/ann-romney-mommy-wars-hilary-rosen-working-women-stay-at-home-moms-ann-romney
[73] Paine, *Father India*, 4.
[74] Ibid., 4-5.

challenge her understanding of Western society.[75] Gilbert cannot discard her assumptions about women, love, and family from her time in the ashram. Instead, her preoccupation with those issues frame every spiritual encounter; the actual location of India simply serves as "a backdrop in [Gilbert's] personal drama."[76] Even with her caveats throughout her memoir, Gilbert takes the "power to represent someone or something in a certain way - within a certain 'regime of representation.'"[77] Of course, it is the memoirist's prerogative to represent the world as he or she sees fit; the troubling factor in Gilbert's work is her blindness to the kind of representative power she wields.

Although Gilbert views her experience with yoga as a way to resolve her own emotional suffering, it is in the contrast between her time in the ashram and the surrounding village that reinforces the touristy nature of her spiritual pilgrimage. As one would expect from a memoir, all of the places Gilbert visits become the backdrop for her personal drama; however, her travels exacerbate Gilbert's exploitation of the exotic to give heft to her own relationship problems without considering that tourism has both "physical and metaphorical" qualities.[78] As theorist Madan Sarup has explained:

> Travel is a fascinating metaphor because it refers not to the fixed but to a journey, a crossing from the familiar centre to the periphery...Tourism is also a metaphor for the imposition of the Western gaze. There is enjoyment by the rich of the exotic difference of the Other and exploitation too. Travelling[sic] has also become an increasingly popular way of 'discovering one's identity.[79]

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Kate Cantrell, "Eat, Pray, Loath: Women's Travel Memoir as Moving Metaphysical Journey or Narcissistic New-Age Babble?" *Ejournalist: a refereed media journal*, 11 no. 1, 4.
[77] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" 259.
[78] M. Sarup *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1996:127) quoted in Melanie Smith, *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 4.
[79] Ibid.

Gilbert's memoir tackles head-on her desire to disrupt her daily life live in solitude so she can find her "true" self. While she, at this point in her life, had lost the majority of her wealth, her profession allows her to take a personal journey of discovery. Through her economic and racialized privilege, Gilbert tours other people's lives in the name of self-discovery, which through the very structure of her book ties to her yoga practice.

According to literary scholar Kate Contrell, travel writing in general "is less preoccupied with what is seen than with who is doing the seeing," and Gilbert turns a blind eye to the problems she faces in India to focus on her own spiritual journey.[80] Gilbert's description of the ashram and its surrounding area speak to the neoliberal attitude that focuses on individual challenges and progress without much concern for the potential effects her actions have on surrounding community. Gilbert talks about needing "strength" to survive life in the ashram, but then describes it as such:

> The Ashram essentially creates the local economy, such as it is, and also stands as the town's pride. Outside the walls of the Ashram, it is all dust and poverty. Inside it's all irrigated gardens, beds of flowers, hidden orchids, birdsong, mango trees, jackfruit trees, cashew trees, palm trees, magnolias, banyans. The buildings are nice, though not extravagant ... I'm sleeping in a concrete dormitory.[81]

In comparison to the dust and poverty outside, the ashram is idyllic, with verdant flora and air-conditioned meditation rooms called caves. In contrast to the energy used at the ashram, the town's one streetlight is a "sixty-watt lightbulb hanging from a wire on a tree in the middle of town."[82] That Gilbert mentions these details shows a superficial awareness of the poverty she encounters around the ashram, but she does not critically

[80] Cantrell, "Eat, Pray, Loath," 3.
[81] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 126.
[82] Ibid.

recognize or analyze the economic inequality she perpetuates through her stay in the ashram. By casually observing the inequality, but not thinking more deeply about it, Gilbert allows readers to also ignore issues of poverty, so that they, along with Gilbert, may continue to focus on self-discovery. Gilbert's description does not engage with or question the issues of poverty she finds outside of the ashram, instead she uses it as a backdrop to evoke a sense of authenticity in her experience. As tourism theorist Luke Desforges argues:

> A strong tradition within tourist practices of associating the 'essential character' of a place with those who are imagined as lying outside the wider circulation of money. The importance of tourism's concern for the 'sacred in primitive society has long been understood... A desire to encounter an imagined geography of authenticity is an important component of tourism consumption.[83]

The desire to associate India with an essential characteristic allows Gilbert to describe a malnourished, local Indian teenage boy who visited the ashram daily as practically beatific. She recognizes that the teenager wore only one outfit to the ashram, which she presumes to be his only set of clothing: "Dark trousers and an ironed white button-down shirt that was far too big for him.. [and] an older man's belt wrapped almost twice around what had to be a sixteen inch waist."[84] The boy, the son of poor local business owners, had come to stay at the ashram because, as Gilbert relates, "when he plays the drums, you can hear God's voice." [85] Unperturbed by the poverty all around her, Gilbert focuses on his luminescent face that, she says, appeared to have been bathed in the Milky Way. Gilbert shoves aside any concerns for the unnamed teenager's experience outside of the

[83] Luke Desforges, "Tourism Consumption and the Imagination of Money," *Royal Geographical Society, (*2001), 358.
[84] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 126.
[85] Ibid., 127.

ashram and basks in the imagined ennobling effects poverty has had on this boy. Gilbert's fixation on what she perceives to be the boy's authentic spirituality speaks to her own desire to find a soul untainted by, what she considers to be, the oppressive effects of Western capitalism's excesses.

By looking for the essential character of India outside of the ashram, while still using her position of privilege within the ashram, her memoir offers a balance between spiritual pilgrim and tourist. In her role as author, Gilbert sits in the middle of a spectrum of experiences where "at one extreme lies sacred 'pilgrimage, a journey driven by faith, religion and spiritual fulfillment' at the other extreme lies the secular tourist who may seek to satisfy some personal or spiritual need thorough tourism."[86] Underlying this spectrum is the similarity behind the pilgrimage and the tour; "both are quests for authentic experiences."[87] The problem of searching for authenticity is that it does not exist. Her version of authentic yoga hinges on a Western desire for a timeless, spiritual East rather than forming a connection with the contemporary conditions of the town outside of the ashram. For example, she and her friend Richard from Austin, Texas, do venture into town a few times a week when they want to have a soda. During these trips, they "watch women doing road work, busting up rocks under the sweltering sun, swinging sledgehammers, barefoot, looking so strangely beautiful in their jewel-colored saris and their necklaces and bracelets. They give us dazzling smiles which I can't begin to understand - how can they be happy doing this rough work under such terrible

[86] Ibid.; Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology*, 79, No. 3 (November, 1973), 589.
[87] Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," 593.

conditions?"[88] These women's lives stand in stark contrast to Gilbert's past life in upstate New York and her current nomadic existence. Gilbert views these women laboring outside as beautiful, but also strange and indecipherable. The unintelligibility disconnects Gilbert from the experience of Indian women, even though she had previously claimed to feel like she has always been a part of the country.[89] Ruth Williams argues that this distance is a key part of the neoliberal spiritual woman who "is discouraged from asking questions about her larger material realities, be it those that prevent her happiness or those that prevent the happiness of other women."[90] Gilbert poses questions, but does nothing with the answers. She asks a local tailor how the women could appear so content and he explained, "It's like this with the villagers, that people in this part of the world were born to this kind of hard labor and work is all they are used to. 'Also,' he adds casually, 'we don't live very long around here.'"[91] Gilbert does not record her response to this comment, but switches into an analysis that begins: "It is a poor village, of course, but not desperate by the standards of India; the presence (and charity) of the Ashram and some Western currency floating around makes a significant difference."[92] Gilbert's nonchalance about relative poverty and short life expectancies speaks to an utter indifference to widespread structural problems faced by many Indians, and Gilbert's solution to the problem of rural poverty is, once again,

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[88] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 160.
[89] Gilbert actually compares the experience to sneaking a new chicken into a coop in the middle of the night so the old chickens wouldn't notice the newcomer and the new chicken would think it had always been in that coop.
[90] Ruth Williams " *Eat Pray Love*: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject, 8. Quoting Janice Peck *The Age of Oprah: Cultural Icon for the Neoliberal Era* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2008).
[91] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 160.
[92] Ibid.

reflecting a neoliberal attitude in discussing her shopping options in the town -- where she is much more of a tourist than pilgrim -- that relies on the influx of Western capital. Unfortunately for the shopkeepers and Gilbert, there is not "so much to buy here, though Richard and I like to look around in all the shops that sell the beads and the little statues."[93] Gilbert looks and does not buy. She considers the offerings at the shop small trinkets not worth her money. Besides, in Gilbert's mind, the influx of capital into the ashram does more than enough to make the town not as "desperate" as other Indian villages. This passage fits uneasily with the rest of the memoir; it follows one of Gilbert's many personal meditative victories and is followed by an unfortunate joke about her temporary and elective homelessness. Rather than serve as a point of reflection or self-analysis, Gilbert's description of life just outside the ashram walls amounts to little more than a passing comment that things could be worse for her. Sandip Roy, in review of the film adaption of *Eat, Pray, Love* articulates the core problem with Gilbert's memoir: "The natives' lives are not very complicated...They are there as the means to her self-discovery. After that is done, it's time to book the next flight."[94] Again, this is a memoir, so the focus naturally stays with Gilbert; however, her work gives license to Westerners to forgive themselves their immense material privilege and to hope that the free market will lift rural Indians out of their difficult economic situation.

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[93] Defenders of Gilbert would site the immense act of charity in Indonesia to a medicine woman she befriends. Helping her buy a home and establish a business. However, this is a one off act by Gilbert and uses capital to address a relatively straight-forward problem. Additionally, in this spiritual, Indonesian divorcee, Gilbert sees herself reflected back. She can not see herself clad in a sari digging a ditch, so she sips her soda and moves on.

[94] Sandip Roy, "The New Colonialism of 'Eat, Pray, Love,'" *Salon.com* August 10, 2010, accessed January 13, 2016 http://www.salon.com/2010/08/14/i_me_myself/.

Gilbert's general impression of the ashram and its surrounding area set the stage for Gilbert's focus during her time in India: the yoga practice she undertakes at the ashram, a practice which highlights her personal concerns and the inescapability of her anxiety about heteronormative domesticity. She westernizes her experience in the ashram, not just for her readers, but in order to make sense of the experience itself, she struggles to master on her path toward personal perfection. She asserts ownership over the yoga practice and makes it more accessible to her audience by way of her introduction to the India section of her memoir. In the first pages of this section, Gilbert presents her yoga practice to her readers in a scene in which she first arrives and quietly joins a group of "mostly Indian women" to sing a devotional song declaring, "This is the hymn *I* call "The Amazing Grace of Sanskrit."[95] This introduction to the ashram suggests two main themes that run through her memoir: 1) that Gilbert has a deep connection to India and belongs singing with Indian women; 2) that she has the power to rename and Westernize her experience as she chooses. Gilbert does not mention the name of the devotional and only translates excerpts of the hymn that emphasized the possibility of perfection. Perfection is what Gilbert wants in no uncertain terms and she demands that each environment fit her perfect vision of the world. Not quite Panglossian in her view, Gilbert's writing suggests that this is the best of all possible worlds even in the face of suffering; it is a world that has a preordained trajectory toward perfection. Her privilege informs her perspective and while she recognizes on some level that her

[95] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 120.

suffering is small and unexceptional, she still does not hesitate to project emotional and spiritual gravitas on to her mundane, bourgeois existence.

Even as Gilbert incorporates herself into life at the ashram to convey her acceptance and authenticity, the real focus of her time at the ashram is her self. Inside the ashram, Gilbert brings an understanding of yoga to her readers framed through a lens of romantic relationships and motherhood. Rather than escape her issues with definitions of her role in life as a woman, she imposes those same problems onto her yoga practice. She describes her Guru as "a feminine, multilingual, university-educated and savvy professional woman...For a nice New England girl like me, it is easy to follow my living teacher, who is so reassuring in her propriety - exactly the kind of Guru you could take home to meet Mom and Dad," however, her Guru's Guru stands in stark contrast: "he was such a wild card."[96] Here, her description of her guru speaks to her desire to have a safe, Westernized Guru that she can bring home to her parents, as if she were bringing home a potential husband. Over the course of her stay in the ashram, Gilbert removes her attachment from Guruyami and reattaches herself to the more dangerous Swamiji. In a far more passionate voice she professes,

> I'm finding that all I want is Swamiji. All I feel is Swamiji. The only person I talk to in my prayers and meditations is Swamiji...He's the master I need when I'm really struggling, because I can curse him and show him all my failures and flaws and all he does is laugh. Laugh, and love me.[97]

Swamiji becomes the most intense bond that she has formed in her time in the ashram, sublimating her desires for unconditional love and desire into this spiritual leader.

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[96] Ibid., 166.
[97] Ibid., 166-167.

Swamiji replaced the divine, internal voice Gilbert heard on the bathroom floor with a stand-in for a man she always wanted in her life. Despite her best efforts, Gilbert cannot articulate her experiences outside of the realm of romantic love, which neuters her attempts at liberation from the social constructs. As Ruth Williams has suggested,

> While the neoliberal rhetoric of spiritual empowerment presents itself as revolutionary in so much as it flies in the face of a traditional patriarchal vision of submissive femininity, it adopts 'the notion of revolution to the most depoliticized possibilities: revolution is alive and well just as long as it's a revolution from within that stays within.[98]

Gilbert, in line with Williams' criticism, does not challenge the structural conditions, which led to her initial unhappiness, but instead finds an insular and closed acceptance of external circumstances.

In another moment of introspection, Gilbert discusses her friendship with an Indian girl, Tulsi, who, on the verge of her eighteenth birthday, faces the initial prospects of an arranged marriage, an event Tulsi simply says "sucks." Tulsi explains to Gilbert the characteristics that make a young woman in India "difficult to marry off," which leads Gilbert to reflect on her own marriageability in India:

> I don't know whether my horoscope is good or bad, but I'm definitely too old and I'm way too educated, and my morals have been publicly demonstrated to be quite tarnished...I'm not a very appealing prospect. At least my skin is fair. I have only this in my favor.[99]

Here Gilbert does not consider Tulsi's circumstances, but instead, turns the conversation back on to her own life, bemoaning the fact that the only thing she has in her favor, in terms of marriageability, is her whiteness. Her self-analysis in the face of Tulsi's lack of

[98] Ruth Williams " *Eat Pray Love*: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject," 9.
[99] Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, 180.

choices in her own life once again highlights Gilbert's myopia and contradicts her own mission to travel in order to stop worrying about her relationships with men.

Gilbert's fears about never remarrying contrast with her desire to avoid all relationships on her trip, but also recalls her inescapable reliance on relationships with men and domesticity, which also emerge in her yoga practice. In one scene, Gilbert discusses the difficulty she encountered when meditating until she happens upon a successful technique to maintain her focus that relies on domestic ideals. She explains: "Thoughts come, but I don't pay much attention to them, other than to say to them in an almost motherly manner, 'Oh I know *you* jokers...go outside and play now...Mommy's listening to God.'"[100] Furthermore, in Gilbert's discussion of grappling with the *Gurugita*, a ninety-minute chant that her Guru expected her followers to undertake every morning, she once again evokes motherhood: "It's only an hour and a half - you can do anything for an hour and a half. For God's sake, you have friends who were in *labor* for fourteen hours...I kept feeling fireballs of like *menopausal* heat pulsating over me..."[101] Here Gilbert shames herself for not demonstrating a certain level of physical and mental toughness in comparison with childbirth, while at the same time comparing herself to women past reproductive age. In both of these comparisons, we see Gilbert measure her worth and experiences in reproductive terms, rather than as an independent identity. Gilbert eventually overcomes her resistance to the *Gurugita* by connecting with motherhood and sublimating her desire for children in a meditation on her nephew during the prayer. She achieves success over the practice when she dedicates the meditation to

[100] Ibid., 142.
[101] Ibid., 164 - 165.

her eight-year-old nephew, in order to help him sleep better. Upon completion of the successful meditation she says she "bowed flat on my face in gratitude to my God, to revolutionary power of live, to myself, to my Guru and to my nephew."[102] Through this meditation, Gilbert creates an image of a nuclear family bound by love; it is a moving manifestation of family, but also speaks to her deepest desires for the perfect mate, the perfect child, the perfect self with "no difference whatsoever between any of these words or any of these ideas, or any of these people."[103] Gilbert wants to find perfect unity framed within an idealized family, however, this sense of connectedness remains internalized and focused on the self.

As these examples from *Eat, Pray, Love* demonstrate, Gilbert creates an understanding of yoga and India that emulates a neoliberal and heteronormative ideal reflecting only individual progress. Gilbert's time studying yoga in India brings readers on a journey that mingles tourist excursion and spiritual pilgrimage. It is a journey that criticizes the excess and structures of Western culture, while ignoring global and economic inequality that exists outside the ashram's walls. Following its publication *Eat, Pray Love* The extension of Gilbert's work beyond herself took a similarly self-centered focus even as it reached a broader audience via an array of consumer goods that continued to champion a neoliberal feminine ideal.

[102] Ibid., 169.
[103] Ibid., 168.

Eat, Pray, Love, Inc.

After its publication and its subsequent run on the bestseller list, *Eat, Pray, Love* spawned its own mini-yoga business that gave readers new ways to experience Gilbert's journey via "perfume, tea, yoga gear, prayer beads, and jewelry to EPL-themed travel tours that include spa treatments, visits to temples," as well as "the "Eat Pray Love" laptop from Sony, or the "Eat Pray Love" prayer beads from Cost Plus, or the Four Seasons "Eat Pray Travel" travel package, or the 400 "Eat Pray Love" products available on the HSN shopping channel."[104] Also, in conjunction with the film adaptation, STA Travel, along with Sony Pictures, Borders, and Lonely Planet, offered tailored travel packages to Italy, India, and Bali. One package offered:

> In India, it will be hard to not get spiritual with the breathtaking beauty in front of your eyes. Your time includes sightseeing tours of Delhi, New and Old, Varanasi, the spiritual heart of India, and Agra, home to the magnificent Taj Mahal. Keep your camera handy as you visit the amazing Akshardham Temple and sacred Sarnath, where Buddha first taught the Dharma. You'll also experience a traditional Hindu aarti ceremony at the River Ganges during your eight-day journey.[105]

From the copy, it sounds like any resistance to spirituality is futile in India and this is a trip that needs to be mediated and documented; one cannot fully experience the Buddha without a photograph of sacred spaces. This particular tour expands on the voyeuristic elements of Gilbert's memoir, distilling her experience to a quick trip that would allow one to have a spiritual experience without too much effort. Even though Gilbert's spiritual journey is fraught, she did have to show strong dedication to Siddha Yoga and

[104]Williams " *Eat Pray Love*: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject," 1. And Stacey Vanek Smtih "'Eat Pray Love....' and Shop!" Marketplace for Friday August 8, 2010, accessed January 2, 2013, http://www.marketplace.org/topics/business/eat-pray-love-and-shop

[105]India: Pray trip STA Travel, accessed January 12, 2013, http://eatpraylove.statravelpackages.com/india/.

its practices prior to attending the ashram, through lengthy and intensive study while in New York.[106] Furthermore, as Ruth Williams argues,

> market logic hinges on perpetuating desires that can only be met via consumption; in the case of [*Eat, Pray, Love*], women are encouraged to express their commitment to themselves, here seen as their commitment to 'living their best lives,' by buying products touted to assist them in this pursuit.[107]

Thus, women's ability to connect to themselves, are external forces in a market economy that espouses individualism via endless consumerism.

The mass commercialization of *Eat, Pray, Love* once again raises a primary anxiety about the degrading effects of consumerism on yoga. Critics of *Eat, Pray, Love* who fall into the trap of believing that the commercialization of yoga goes against "authentic" yoga rely on a view of a timeless, ahistorical yoga that has not really existed in the United States (similar to the lululemon John Galt shopping bag incident). Supporters of this perspective could argue that one of the main themes of *Eat, Pray, Love* was Gilbert's abandonment of materialism to find her authentic self; however, she never fully abandons her economic desires or belief in capitalism, even as she travels around the world unencumbered with material possessions. Thus, even as Gilbert practices a more spiritual and meditative yoga than the variety promoted by lululemon, both the author and the company "actually [move] women away from political, economic, and emotional agency by promoting materialism and dependency masked as

[106] For a full explanation of the requirements to attend the Siddha Yoga ashram in India, Gurudev Siddha Peeth, see http://www.siddhayoga.org.in/longterm.html, accessed January 16.2013.
[107] Williams " *Eat Pray Love*: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject," 220.

empowerment."[108] Thus, the female neoliberal spiritual subject becomes solely responsible for "creat[ing] her own circumstances by thinking positive thoughts and making good choices regardless of the material conditions in which she lives,"[109] or without real concern about the material conditions of the people she seeks to borrow from.

Yoga plays different roles in lululemon and *Eat, Pray, Love*, but, ultimately, both cultural artifacts rely on a fantasy of neoliberal femininity and anti-consumerist consumerism that appeals to individualism and self-improvement through yoga. lululemon uses yoga as part of its core corporate identity while purposefully scrubbing yoga of any overt spirituality or connection to Indian culture. The primary ethos of lululemon is to encourage women to focus on themselves in order to compete in a stressful and inhospitable world. Elizabeth Gilbert, on the other hand, presents a yoga practice that has far deeper spiritual resonance, but which still serves the goals of individual improvement above all else.

[108] Williams " *Eat Pray Love*: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject" *The Journal of Popular Culture,* 2011, 7 Quoting Joshunda Saunders and Diana Barnes- Brown "Eat, Pray, Spend: Priv-lit and The New Enlightened American Dream," *Bitch Magazine,* October, 22 2010, accessed January, 16, 2013, http://bitchmagazine.org/article/eat-pray-spend.
[109] Ibid,, 220.

Conclusion

In December 2012 the national media briefly turned its attention to protests surrounding children practicing yoga in public schools in Encinitas, California, a small seaside community near San Diego lay about thirty miles north of Point Loma, California, where Katherine Tingley's Raja Yoga School faced its own protests over 100 years ago.[1] The Encinitas Union School District found itself in the midst of a minor community crisis when it mandated yoga classes in its elementary schools, with an option to opt out with parental consent. The students are taught Ashtanga yoga in the classes, a branch of yoga founded by Krishna Pattabhi Jois and originally introduced to the Encinitas community in 1975. After attending some of the yoga classes at the school, some parents became concerned about the intent of the program. Concerned parents saw it not as an exercise class, but as an introduction to Hindu beliefs. The leader of the ongoing protests, Mary Eady, told a NPR reporter that in the class she witnessed that the students "were being taught to thank the sun for their lives and the warmth that it brought, the life that it brought to the earth and they were told to do that right before they did their sun salutations exercises."[2] Eady, working with Dean Broyles, the president and chief counsel of the conservative leaning, National Center for Law & Policy, launched a

[1] Will Carless, "Yoga Class Draws a Religious Protest," *New York Times*, December 15, 2012, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/us/school-yoga-class-draws-religious-protest-from-christians.html?ref=us&_r=1&; Kyla Calvert,"Promoting Hinduism? Parents Demand Removal of School Yoga," Morning Edition on NPR, aired January 9, 2013, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.npr.org/2013/01/09/168613461/promoting-hinduism-parents-demand-removal-of-school-yoga-class?utm_source=NPR&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=20130109.
[2] Calvert,"Promoting Hinduism? Parents Demand Removal of School Yoga."

small, but vocal campaign against the yoga program.[3] While Eady and Broyles argued that teaching yoga in schools was equivalent to teaching Hinduism, and therefore violating the First Amendment, Tim Baird, the district's superintendent remarked that, "if your faith is such that you believe that simply by doing the gorilla pose, you're invoking the Hindu gods, then by all means your child can be doing something else."[4] The debate over yoga in the Encinitas schools marks a divide in the community between more conservative and liberal factions who, through this debate, have used yoga to stake claims on appropriate and inappropriate instruction in the schools.

More conservative members of the Encinitas community have cast yoga in the schools as a threat to their Christian beliefs and as a violation of the separation of church and state. By contrast, parents who support the yoga program echoed Baird's sentiment, that yoga, as presented in the school district, is entirely secular. Monique Cocco told reporters that her daughter had not discovered a "newfound knowledge of Hinduism," instead Cocco related that her daughter tells her that "she did the pancake today and she lays down and then she cracks up because it's so funny."[5] In a similar vein of secularism, another supporter of the yoga program, Brigid Brett, wrote to the local *North Country Times* that: "we are living in an era when children are overstressed, over bombarded by technology and overmedicated…Who wouldn't want their children to be able to calm

[3] "The National Center for Law & Policy (NCLP) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) legal defense organization which focuses on the protection and promotion of religious freedom, the sanctity of life, traditional marriage, parental rights, and other civil liberties." From their website accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.nclplaw.org/.
[4] Carless, "Yoga Class Draws a Religious Protest."
[5] Calvert,"Promoting Hinduism? Parents Demand Removal of School Yoga."

themselves in a safe and natural way?"[6] A third position has emerged from the debate that maintains a connection between Christianity and yoga. As Russell Case, a representative of the Jois Foundation remarked to the *New York Times* reporter, "We're good Christians that just like to do yoga because it helps us to be better people." On one level the debate is about teaching yoga in schools, but, in keeping with the discussions in this dissertation, the debate is also about defining yoga for an Americans.

In the Encinitas case we see a conflagration of the different historical tensions of yoga that have flared throughout the twentieth century. In Encinitas yoga is simultaneously seen as dangerous, innocuously secular, or complementary to Christianity. The competing ideas surrounding yoga as a concept in Encinitas reflect more than just a debate about a specific kind of yoga practice; it reveals the willingness of people to recast yoga to fit different needs and agendas.

Throughout this dissertation I have tried to choose moments when the ways various Westerners adopted yoga for American audiences reflected and articulated larger contemporary cultural, political, social, and economic concerns. The case studies in this dissertation illustrate how transnational flows of culture have shaped yoga, but, and as the case in Encinitas reminds us, how yoga in America reflects local concerns and remain open to myriad interpretations. By reflecting back on how people shaped interpretations of yoga for Americans and how the popular press reacted to those interpretations, we can see the ways yoga changed: moving from its esoteric and religious origins to a more

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[6] "Encinitas Union School Yoga Sees Backlash, Parents Call it Religious Indoctrination," *Huffington Post*, October 12, 2012, accessed January 29, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/12/encinitas-union-school-di_n_1961578.html.

secular cultural practice. Yet, even as these changes in understanding of yoga emerged, a consistent relationship between yoga and capital played an important role throughout its history in the United States. The durable image of the ascetic, pure, anti-capitalist yoga has been relegated to smaller pockets within the United States, in contrast to the most popular, mainstream representations of yoga that emerged in the late twentieth that focus on the connections between yoga and consumerism.

By focusing on the trajectory of popular understandings of yoga in America, I have worked to correct the idealized categorization of yoga as a timeless practice that remains above economic, political and social concerns. In considering the goals of various teachers and the responses their teaching received we also see a proliferation of the ways people today discuss yoga that are more strongly connected to contemporary concerns than have previously been explored. This approach follows the work being done in more recent religious scholarship in its attempt to "reflect both local cultural particularities and transregional intellectual currents."[7]

This dissertation has focused on the recasting of yoga to fit particular moments in U.S. history and reveal how, like the Encinitas case, reception of different yoga teachers have also reflected specific historical conditions. Overall the changes of yoga's reception over the course of the twentieth century have intersected with larger shifts in religious understanding in the United States. In the early twentieth century pluralistic ideas about religion had entered mainstream conversations, as evidence in the speakers and large

[7] Thomas Tweed, "Expanding the Study of U.S. Religion: Reflections on the State of a Subfield," *Religion*, 40, no. 4. (2010), 250.

audiences in attendance at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, as briefly discussed in chapter one. Despite an interest in a plurality of religious experiences, yoga remained on the edges of the conversation and the Protestant majority maintained a comfortable cultural hegemony in America. In order to introduce yoga within this milieu, people like Katherine Tingley borrowed approaches established by Spiritualists and Christian Scientists that combined esoteric interests with Enlightenment reason. Furthermore, Tingley's monetary ambitions in establishing her global headquarters at Point Loma and expanding the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society (UBTS), and to an even greater degree in Pierre Bernard's Clarkstown Country Club, yoga in America from the early twentieth century borrowed the logic of the "gospel of wealth." While meeting with resistance from inside and outside of Protestantism, this "gospel" became part of cultural understandings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that embraced individual efforts to become wealthy as a part of, not the antithesis of, a spiritual path.

These changes in attitudes about religion and understanding the local and the transnational flows of yoga have worked within a heavily mediated, colonial discourse. As established in the introduction, I have endeavored to explore the ways in which an evolving colonial discourse shaped teachers experience with adopting yoga for an American audience, and how the media has viewed yoga at different times. As stated in the introduction, Ann McClintock frames the West's understanding of the "Other" and "Others' culture" in terms of the paradox of abjection, anachronistic space, and

panoptical time.[8] These three frameworks when applied, though not in name, to yoga throughout this work present the ways yoga has been frozen in time and place, but at the same time has provoked anxiety in outside observers. In sum, the chapters call on us to reflect on the larger question of why certain cultural, social, and/or spiritual practices are adopted by Americans at certain times, and the ways in which adopted practices are portrayed to a broader popular audience.

In addition to shifting religious attitudes, broader cultural shifts informed and changed yoga practices in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century. Tingley balanced an expansion of gender roles within the UBTS's Raja Yoga School with earlier Victorian ideals of prescribed middle-class ideals of gender and respectability. This balancing allowed Tingley's UBTS to expand even while it faced heavy criticism from the Los Angeles *Times* and the Gerry Society for corrupting the morals of individuals and threatening the fabric of American society. In response to these accusations of foreignness, Tingely and her followers created a narrative that linked their beliefs with patriotism and expansionist practices of the United States at the time.

Pierre Bernard, while overlapping with Tingley, faced a different set of challenges as he established a more sexually charged, Tantric yoga practice. By the 1920s, Bernard had found infamy in New York City but also attracted followers that embraced a new sexual ethos of the Jazz Age. While monitored and harassed by vice squads, in the urban and increasingly Bohemian city of New York, Bernard managed to find people interested

[8] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (Routledge, 1995), 37.

the promise of yoga as a way to find truth, fulfilling sexuality, and spiritual uplift. As economic concerns overtook New York with the crash of 1929, Bernard shifted his approach to focus on more practical matters such as self-improvement and frugality.

Concerns of practicality and highly, individualized self-improvement continued to define popular understanding of yoga into the post-World War II era, when Indra Devi working from Hollywood brought a feminized, domesticated, yoga to American women. For Devi, yoga could work for anyone, and like her predecessors Tingley and Bernard, shaped the discourse around yoga toward the practice as suited for American life. Teaching during the height of the Cold War, Devi taught yoga in terms of national and individual health, while making sure that it fit with the consensus mentality of what mattered to Americans at the time. In addition to domesticating yoga, Devi found wide acceptance for her teaching, in part because of a generalized interest in a containable and consumable view of Asia and Asian culture broadly conceived. Within these cultural conditions Devi faced far less resistance to teaching yoga than Tingley or Bernard, ushering in a decade of associating yoga with housewives in leotards, rather than exotic images or esotericism.

The consensus culture Devi worked within was unstable and in terms of spiritual seeking eventually fractured further by the late 1960s and into the 1970s with an expansion of New Age religious movements. As the work of Swami Kriyananda at the Ananda Village illuminates for some people that focused more intensely on spirituality, while not drifting to far from accepted views of society and capitalism, emerged as the more popular form of yoga in the period. While some scholars have found the 1970s to

be a pivitol moment in the formation of a so-called "New Age capitalism," in the case of yoga, balancing economic concerns with spiritual and physical concerns never operated entirely separately. Even with anti-consumerist underpinnings of many yoga practices today, in the Ananda Village we begin to see a view of yoga as part of a way of life that encouraged conscientious consumerism rather than strict anti-consumerism.

In the discussion of lululemon and *Eat, Pray, Love* in the final chapter, we see an increase in scale of the dissemination of popular understanding of yoga through material goods and personal memoir. Within in these two context we see a period of mass mainstreaming of yoga into Americans lives, even though certain groups such as some of the parents in Encitas, worry about the implications of yoga in American society. Mediated through clothing, blog posts, memoirs, and consumer goods one could argue that yoga has been entirely secularized, however, the idea of yoga, as opposed to other forms of consumerism or exercise, retains in all its forms a vestiges of spirituality if for no other reason than it is called yoga. Even the overt capitalism espoused by lululemon remains intertwined with an abstract, nebulous notion of individual spirituality.

While this last chapter highlights an increase in scale of the commercialization of yoga in the 1990s and 2000s, it is my hope, that in conjunction with previous chapters, the reader sees the interconnectedness of yoga and capital in America throughout the course of the twentieth century. In exploring the backgrounds of prominent yoga teachers in the U.S., their practices, and the reception of those practices in the media, this dissertation has hopefully succeed in developing a more complex picture of how yoga has been popularly understood in America and move away from an overly simplistic view of

yoga as either a transcendent, timeless practice or as a secular, meditative set of exercises.

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